

T H E
Christian Belief:

Wherein is Asserted and Proved,
That as there is Nothing in the
G O S P E L Contrary to R E A S O N, yet
there are some D O C T R I N E S in it
Above R E A S O N; and these being
necessarily enjoyn'd us to Believe, are
properly call'd,

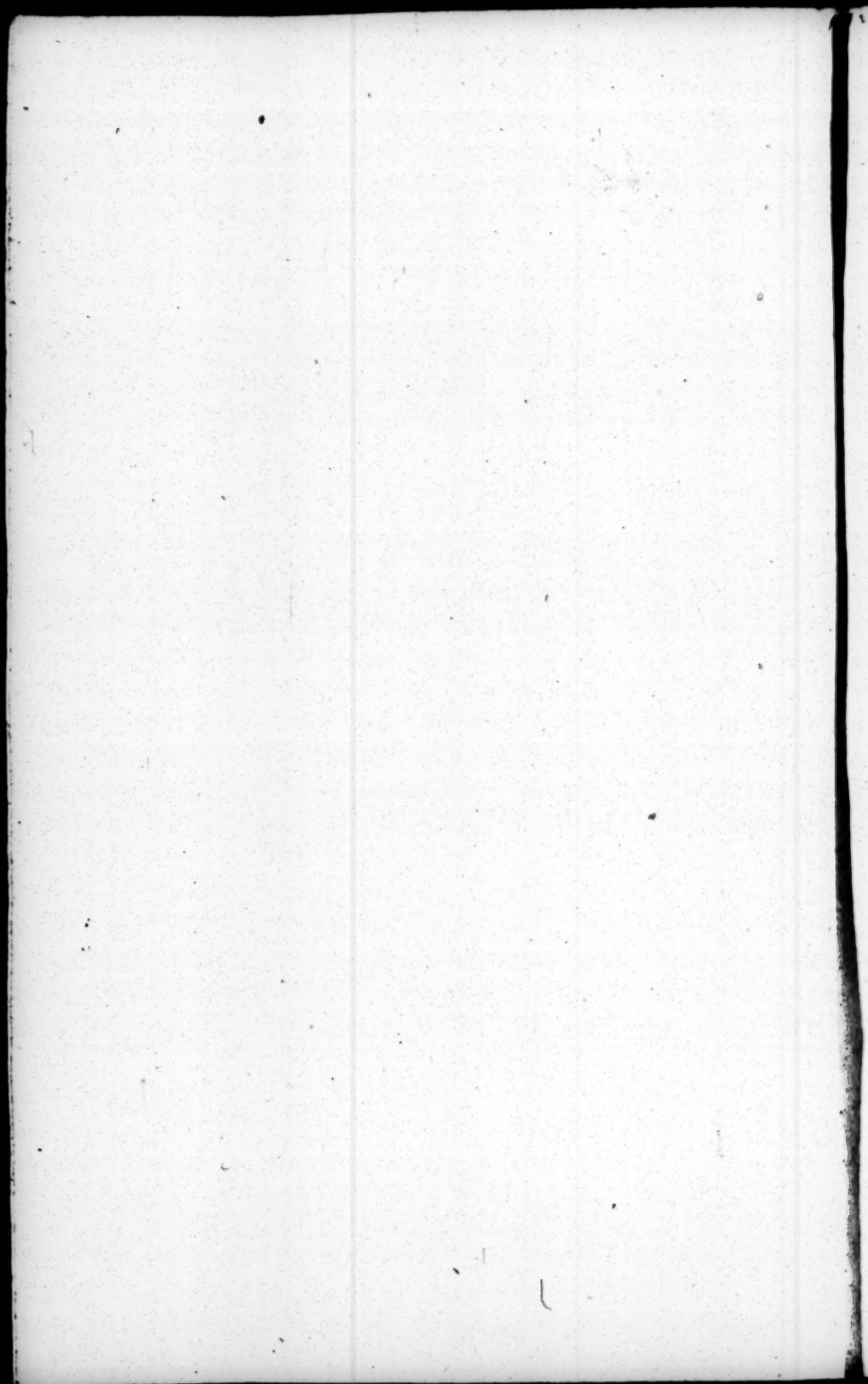
M Y S T E R I E S;
I N

Answer to a B O O K,
I N T I T U L E D,
Christianity not Mystrious.

The Second Edition;
W I T H A
P R E F A C E, and other A D D I T I O N S.

*But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery,
even the hidden Mystery of God.*

London: Printed by W. Onley, for A. Bosvile, at the Dial,
against St. Dunstan's Church, in Fleet-street, 1697.



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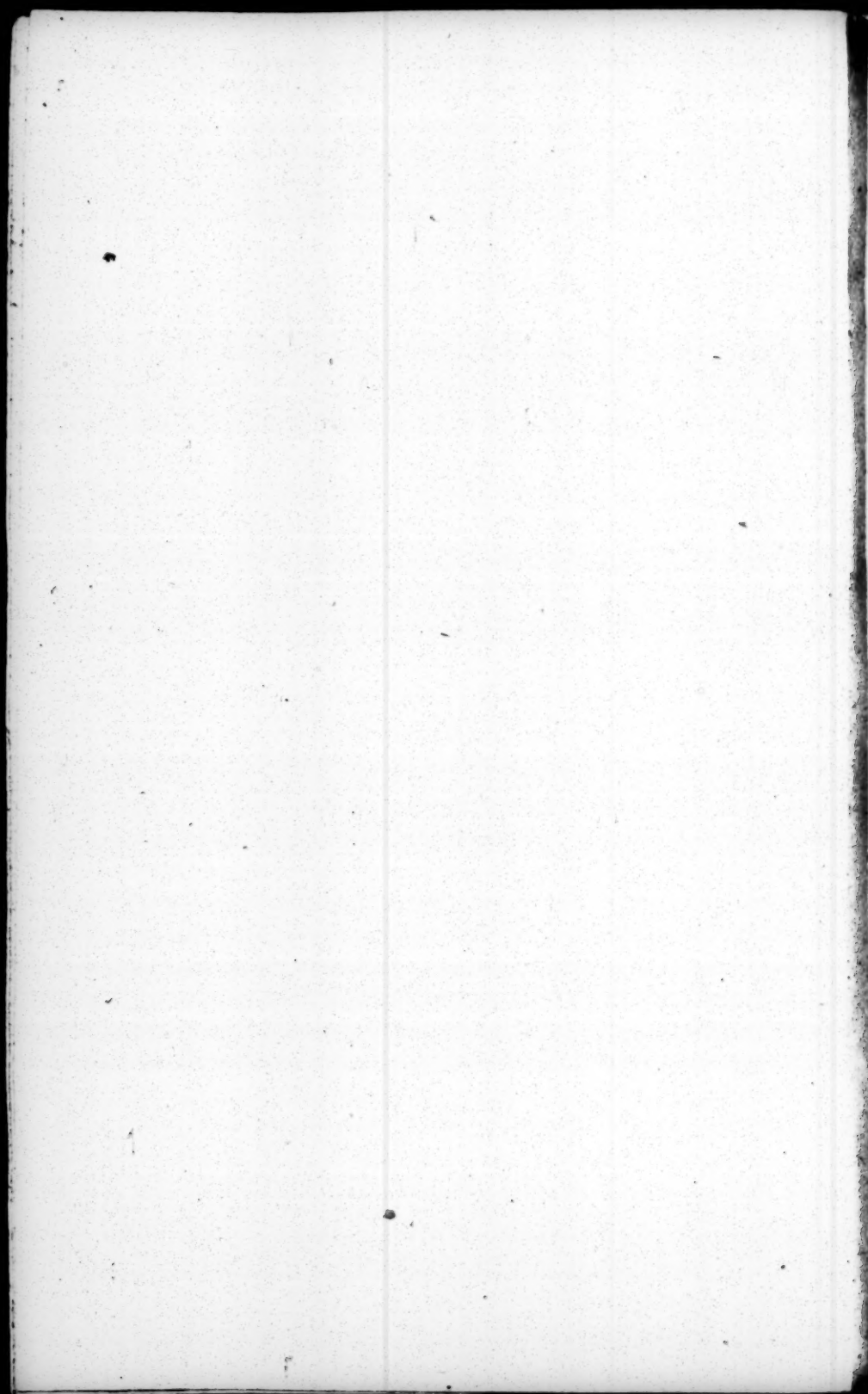
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THE
 PREFACE:
 WITH
 REFLECTIONS
 ON
What is Remarkable
 IN

Mr. **Roland's** PREFACE.

THE *Learned* and *Judicious*
 may, perhaps, wonder what
 special Motive, or Design,
 could engage any Man to attack an
Author, the Emptiness of whose
 Performances had so long caused
 'em to be passed over with Neglect,

or Contempt ; I must confess, when this Discourse first made its Publick Entry, upon a transient Perusal, I thought there was scarce *any Thing* in *it*, that could answer for the *time* that must be laid out in a *formal Reply* : but for all this, there were *things* conspired in this *petty Affair* (as sometimes in *Matters* of the highest *Importance*) which begat new Measures and Resolutions, tho' it may be such, as cannot well be accounted for : For,

First, Whereas it was sent Orphan like into the World, as if designed to live upon Compassion, rather then be crush'd by Envy or Malice ; now it appears in a Triumphant manner owned by both its Relations, as well *Editor* as *Author*. A sufficient Indication truly that things often make their own way through the Corruption of an Age, tho' they want an Intrinsic Worth to support 'em ; and this truly is matter enough to push a Man on upon a Principle of Zeal, when the pure Merits of the Cause will not give the least Provocation ;
it's

it's true, sometimes the ill management, or emptiness of a *Treatise*, is not to be an absolute concluding Argument for rejecting the Consideration of it; especially when 'tis fraught with Malice, as well as Error, or carries a Malignant Aspect, or Evil Tendency, and is industriously dispersed, or lodged in the Hands of *Unwary Readers* of the highest Rank, I'm sure these have been the Artifices, and establish'd Methods of my *Adversary*.

And therefore, as this alone is Plea enough for my present Undertaking, so I could wish my Brethren, the Clergy, would take this *Hint* to heighten their *Jealousie*, and arm their *Resolution*, in giving a timely Check to Error, though never so seemingly Impotent.

But to return, That which was more particular in this Affair, was some warm Discourses of Friends, started upon his *Second Edition*, wherein the *Character* of the *Author*, with respect to his *Treatise*, was canvass'd both ways: I must confess, there were some

things offered that left an Impression; and besides this, Curiosity moving to see the Improvements of a new Edition; I immediately resolved to examine the whole Treatise with more care and niceness.

Upon trial, though I found nothing considerable to alter my first Sentiments; yet being more exquisitely sensible, that the Design of it was extremely pernicious, and no less than a *Basis* to overturn the Fundamental *Articles* of our *Faith*; I thought the Publick would easily excuse the Impertinence, if I bestowed a few *Remarks* upon it, to prevent Infection, at least in an *Unwary Reader*: And truly I more willingly engaged in a formal Reply, because I could not only prevent my Adversary, but advance another useful Design, which was to support the Cause of the Church of *England*, against the main Attacks of this Gentleman's Brethren, the *Socinians*; and that is, by dispossessing 'em of their strongest Fortress, I mean their Retreat to common *Ideas*, or *Notions*, or which is
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the same thing, the *pure Dictates* and *Conceptions* of *Humane Reason*, for the *Scrutiny* and *Decision* of the *Sublimest Matters of Faith*: And I'm perswaded, this is the most effectual Method to baffle all their Efforts, to maintain the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints, and bring the whole Controversie to a speedy Issue: For when once we have demonstrated the *Absurdity* of making *Humane Conceptions* the sole and absolute STANDARD for the Reception of DIVINE TRUTHS, we cannot only with ease silence all other Arguments that are brought to attack them, but establish them on such a foot, that the *Gates of Hell* shall not be able to prevail against them.

But after all that has been said, I shall vindicate my Undertaking, by flying to a Topick common to all Parties, and much used by this Gentleman, I mean, by setting up for an *Advocate* and *Defender* of *Truth*; it's certain, I have now a better Title to this Argument than he, being not only engaged to espouse the

Cause of that which I am perswaded is Truth ; but the Cause of an *Establisb'd Church* (of which I have the happines of being a Member in a double *Capacity*) that has owned and declared the things I contend for, to be *Eternal* and *Divine Truths*. It's true, he labours to approve himself a most *generous Advocate* for *Truth*, since he would needs perswade us, he has made an *ample Provision* against *Deists*, and *Atheists*, by reducing all *Revealed Truths*, to the *Level* of *Humane Reason*. But, truly, I know no one, but those *very Persons*, and his *own Faction*, can thank him for it. I remember in one place, he charges the *Growth of Deism*, upon those that assert *Mysteries in Religion* : But what can give a greater *Advantage* to the *Cause*, or tempt 'em to call in question the *Truth* of *Revelation*, and consequently the *Being* of a *God*, or his *Providence*, than to pretend to *unravel* these *Truths* by dint of *Reason*, which are in their own Nature *incomprehensible*, and are represented as such ? In a word, this

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evidently prostitutes the most *Sacred* and *Solemn Truths*, to the *Mercy* of *Atheists*, and *Unbelievers*; it gives 'em a *Commission* to arraign 'em by the *narrow Conceptions* of *Humane Reason*; and when, upon a fair View, they will not Comport with 'em, it gives 'em an Opportunity to censure *Revelation* itself, as a *senceless Imposture*. But to proceed, now I'm engaged on this Topick, give me leave to reflect a little his bitter Exclamations upon the Deplorable Condition of the Age: But for what? 'Tis for nothing, but because he has not under the specious Title of *an Advocate for Truth*, an unlimited Toleration to deliver his Sentiments at Pleasure, against an Establish'd Religion, [*Even as freely as a Physitian declares against a received Hypothesis*, Page 5.] For after all his Harrangues, what he has delivered in three succeeding Pages, amounts to no more than this: See Page 4, 5, 6.

Now certainly every *Establish'd Constitution* is supposed to make as great Pretensions to *Truth*, as any
pri-

private Persons, that declare against any of her *Articles*, or *Sanctions*, and therefore, though every one is to promote what he fully believes to be truth, at the greatest Hazards and Danger; yet if he suffers from an *Establisb'd Constitution*, he may possibly have nothing to blame but his own Confidence and Presumption: Whatever Indulgencies Christianity makes for private Opinions, I can see nothing that forbids Censures and Punishments, even *Civil* as well as *Ecclesiastical*, against those that publicly oppose her *Sanctions* or *Decrees*, and disturb her *Peace*; and though he seems to represent it as a *Piaculum*, or Monstrous piece of Barbarity for the Civil Magistrate to [*Arrest the Excommunicate, and prosecute the Erroneous*, Page 29.] Yet to neglect it, where a publick Attack is made upon the Peace of the Church, I think cannot well be reconciled, with their Character of being *Nursing-Fathers and Mothers to CHRIST's Church*.

But further, this Gentleman lets us understand, that he is sincere,
[Be-

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[*Being thoroughly convinced of what he maintains, Page 9.*] and therefore it's hard any Man should suffer for the sincerest Endeavours after Truth: But certainly whosoever goes about to attack the standing *Doctrines* of an *Establiſh'd Church*, should take care that his *Notions* are not only very clear, and as he has it, [*Carries the highest Evidence in 'em, Page 8.*] but that they are expressly contained in Scripture, and consequently are, as it were, the Dictates of *Divine* and *Infinite* TRUTH; otherwise an *Establiſh'd Church* may rightfully assert her own Truths, and suppress all Attempts that are made to perplex or disturb 'em: And as for the Pastors of this Church, they are to appear for Truth, and for the Authority of her Constitution, upon a Principle of Trust, for Truth, God, and the Church; this is but a piece of *Canonical Obedience* to the *Apostle's Command*, in contending, and that earnestly, *for the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints.*

But

But to return, Notwithstanding his Endeavours to cast an Imputation upon our *English* Establishment, as if she disallowed all Reports of Divine Matters that differ from her Confessions of Faith, with a design to make Religion unintelligible and obscure, *Page 5, 6.*

It appears she has a just Authority to censure, especially those that advance *Principles*, and *Positions*, with a Design to Undermine her *Establish'd Fundamental Doctrines*.

This I'm confident will vindicate those Hue and Cries of *Hereſie*, he industriously upbraids us with ; for, though they are not pronounced or issued forth upon every Difference in *Opinion*, yet where we find *Matters* of *Faith* industriously attack'd, we are not affraid to fix a just *Mark* on the *Author* ; and truly this Gentleman, I'm perſwaded, has advanced ſuch a *Set* of *Principles*, as would have carried him into the fouleſt Errors, had he not ſuffered this *Seasonable Rebuke*. And then I know nothing that could have pronounced the Hue and Cry illegal
or

or unjust ; I have no where called him *Hæretick* , but I dare submit myself to the *Censure* of the World, from what is offer'd in the following Discourse, whether to profess my self an *Advocate* for my *Mother Church* and for *Truth*, is not in itself Argument enough to apologize for my present Undertaking.

But to proceed : The next thing I have to offer, is to Apologize for the Management of the following Discourse ; I must confess, there are the same Replies (at least formed on the same Notions) that occur more than once, without any considerable Variations : But its well known, he that Answers Books, must Dance Attendance to the *Motions* of the *Author* ; and if he labours like a *Mill-horse*, in a Circle, that Replies must in some Measure follow him. It's true, I might have past over a great many impertinent Positions, by meer References, to what had been offered to Arguments of the same *stamp* ; but, I presumed, this would not be so
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fatisfactory, nor cogent, with a great many, as when a particular Reply is subjoyned at the foot of each Position, that's any wise material: and since a *Reply* was to be made, I thought it not proper to multiply Notions, nor Instances, where the Argument did not compel me.

But further: Some, perhaps, especially this *Gentleman* and his Adherents, may complain, that I have used him a little roughly, not like a *Master of Reason*. But for this, as long as I have not rak'd into his *Morals*, or *Character*, and studiously avoided all Personal Reflections on this Account; if there's any thing severe and disagreeable, he must impute it to his own confused *Notions*, and illogical *Conclusions*.

Indeed, he tells us, he expects [no Deference to be paid him; and if his Reasons be not cogent, he shall take in good part a Modest and Pertinent Animadversion, Page 6.] But truly the Question will be, What he calls Modest or Pertinent? I'm per-

perswaded, unless he had forgot his Old Language and Positiveness, every thing that runs counter to his *Notions*, will be branded for Impudence or Impertinence.

But give me leave to Expostulate a little with him: With what Face can he expect to be treated with Tenderness or Modesty, when in a little *Preface*, (not to say any thing of the Body of his *Treatise*) he seems to have Conjured up all the Malice and Calumnies of Hell, to blacken an *Order of Men*, and an *Establis'd Constitution*? Does he not suggest in one place, That Religion is advanced [*to Patronize Ambition, Impiety, and Contention*? Page 7.] Does he not in another place, pronounce [*Divinity a Trade*? Page 19.] And consequently, a thing that only serves to bring in Gain and Credit? Page 6. Does he not represent the Clergy, as the undoubted *Authors of Mystery*? Page 29.] and industriously resolving all Religion into it? Page 6. Does he not make our Institutions of Divinity, to be a *Mystery of Iniquity*,

quity, Page 22. And suggests, as if the Essence of Religion was placed in unintelligible Terms, and empty Sounds; invented to make plain Things obscure, or to cover our Ignorance?

Nay, (and which is more unpardonable) the *Holy Scripture* is put to the Torture, to countenance this *Scholastick Jargon*, Page 11. Does he not represent us, imitating the *Cabalistical Usurpations*, who taught them to believe all their Glosses to be *Mysteries*; and, consequently, taught 'em Subjection to Heathenish Rites? Page 20. It's manifest he draws the Parallel: for he tells us, *I wish no Application of this could be made, in the following Discourse, to the Case of any Christians*; and then falls foul upon us, for imposing *Unscriptural Ceremonies, and the Belief of Unfathomable Explanations, of what we stiffly hold to be Incomprehensible*: Nay, he charges us with *Pressing Obedience to our own Constitutions and Discipline, while we Connive at all Non-conformity to the*

the Divine LAW, Page 21. Does he not represent us, *Instructing our People to distrust their own Reason, and pay a blind Veneration for those that lived before 'em, with a firm Resolution to adhere to all the Expositions of their Party, and that to believe only, is the sure Foundation of all our Allegories, and that Any-thing may be made of Every-thing.* Page 23.

It's true, he does not expressly fix 'em upon the *Establisb'd Church of England*; but he informs us where his *Malice* is directed [*against Protestants, not Papists.* Page 15.] And consequently, the very *Calumnies* he singles out, points out the *Church of England* to be the very *Object*.

And now, what a *Modest* sort of *Usage* is this? Is not his whole *Preface*, a continued *Invective*, as false as 'tis scandalous and malicious? Has he not recourse to stale *Objections* against *Ceremonies*, *Church-Discipline*, and *Canonical Obedience*, that have been more

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than

than once exploded? And if he'll revive the *Dispute*, and fix any thing directly against our *present Establishment*, I'll promise, or procure an *Answer*, that will expose his *Folly*, as much as he has exposed his *Malice*. Does he not charge us with downright *Falshoods*, as to the *History of MYSTERIES*? I question not, but the *Reply* that is made to the *Chapter* that treats of it, will oblige an unbiaſſed *Reader* to pronounce 'em ſuch.

What is more villanous, than to charge the *present Establishment* with a ſuperſtitious Adherence to *Terms* and *barbarous Words*, even to the racking and perverting of *Scripture*; when it's well known, what great Deference our *Church* pays to *Scripture*, ſince ſhe makes it the *Great Rule of Faith and Practice*, and the laſt *Judge of Controversies*?

But as for *Words* or *Terms*, it's very well known, how uſeful, not to ſay abſolutely neceſſary, they are for the *Improvements of Humane Know-*

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Knowledge, in any Art or Science. Infomuch, that tho' my Lord *Bacon*, and Mr. *Lock*, disdained to tread the *beaten Path*, yet they, as well as all other *Projectors*, were forced to Coyn a Set of *new Terms*, it may be in 'emselves no more apposite, or intelligible, than the former.

Thus, we see, this *Gentleman* is very consistent with himself, throughout his whole *Preface*: for there seems to be no Dispute, but whether he should exert more *Malice* or *Falshood*. Indeed, the Composing of this *Preface*, seems to be prescribed by his *Physician* (that knew his *Constitution* well) instead of a *Vomit*; for it has emptied more *Gall* and *Filth* than that could have done. And how can this very *Gentleman* be displeased, if he finds himself attackt with some Transports of *Heat* and *Warmth*? Are not all these Suggestions absolutely forreign to the Merits of the Cause? Had he not out-done all these *little Insults* in a more Manly

[a 2] Way,

Way, by proving his Main Design upon pure Dint of Argument? He protests, indeed, a great deal of Sincerity and Integrity ; but such foul *Managements*, will make any *thinking Man* suspect, he's driving a more *Selfish Design*, than that of Instructing the Ignorant : [*His own Words*, Page 21.] Indeed, it looks as if he were engaged to carry on a *Massacre*, rather than form a *Defence* for *Truth* : for he exerts himself more liberally, in bringing an *Universal Odium* upon the CLERGY, than in proving his *Main Design*. Upon the whole then, it's indisputably manifest, if any thing has dropt that's *severe* or *indecent*, I dare appeal to all the World, whether this *Gentleman* (that has extorted it) has not furnish'd me with an ample *Apology* ; insomuch, that he himself, if he places things in a true Light, cannot complain of *Injustice*, unless it be for the *Negative part* of it, in not paying him home to the full in his *own Coyn*.

And

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And now having Apologized for my Design and Method in Writing, give me leave to enlarge a little more upon the Designs of our *Adversary*: And First, After having disgorged himself very plentifully against the present *Institutions of Divinity*, he at last presents us with his own *Model*. And to let us see, what *Publick Blessings* are wrapt up in *him*, he gives us the Prospect of another *Noble Piece*, that now lies by him, and may serve as an *Introduction* to this: It's Title is, *Systems of Divinity exploded*. Page 24. I could wish he would put the World into a Condition to pass an Estimate upon it, as well as himself, and judge how justly the *Dissertation* merits the Title. But truly he has given us a *hint* where his main Efforts are made, *viz* in exposing the *Method of our Systems of Divinity*: for he lets us understand, *That to prove the Authority and Perfection, before we teach the Contents of Scripture, is Confusion*. Page 25. His Arguments are, *The Authority and*

The PREFACE.

Perfection of Scripture, are chiefly to be known by the Contents of it. How can any be sure, that the Scripture contains all Things necessary to Salvation, till he first Reads it over? Nay, how can he conclude it to be Scripture, or the Word of God, till he exactly studies it? Ibid.

Here is an egregious piece of trifling; for tho' we begin our *Systems of Divinity* with proving the Divine Authority of *Scripture*, I know no *Divine* of the *Establish'd English Church*, that has not recourse to the Subject Matter of *Scripture*, for a principal Argument of its Divine Authority. We constantly appeal to the Purity and Perfection of its Precepts, to the Nature of its Doctrines, and the Great Ends and Designs of the whole *Institution*; so that the UNBELIEVER may object what he pleases against any of 'em; but then it is no Violation of the Laws of *Method*, to propose the Divine Authority and Perfection of *Scripture*, for the *Leading Articles* in our *Systems of Divinity*, no more than

than it's a piece of Tautology, or Impertinence, to Explain any Doctrines, or Precepts, after the Perfection and Authority of *Scripture* is asserted: for we may appeal to an *Adversary*, to object what he pleases from *Scripture*, to explode its Divinity; and yet when its Divinity and Perfection are asserted and agreed upon, we may justly proceed to unfold the Nature of all Christian Doctrines and Precepts, and digest 'em into *Method* and *Order*.

Indeed, I cannot imagine how this *Gentleman*, that owns both the Authority and Perfections of *Scripture*, and that all the Doctrines of *Christianity* must be founded in *Scripture*, can be offended at the received *Method* of our present *Systems*: certainly, if *Scripture* be the *Standard* and *Canon* of all Doctrines, the most regular Method in drawing up a *Scheme of Christian Doctrines*, will be to assert the Authority and Perfection of the *Canon*, from whence alone they are to be taken;

but it's well known, how easie it is to find a Flaw in the most accurate *Model*, where the Man is not able to Improve it, and to play the *Critic*, and Censure, and Condemn, where he's not able to Improve the Subject, were he to act as an *Author*: this is a *Talent* which I will not deny this *Pretender to Reason*; but as for the other, I mean, before he undertakes to draw up a *Body of Divinity*, I should advise him, to apply himself to some *Friend* in the *University*, he, not long since, (and for no good *End*) lived in, and beg his Instructions in the *Elements* of *Artificial Logick*, since he appears to be so *notoriously deficient*, in the common *Rules* and *Dictates* of *Natural Logick*; tho' perhaps, he may esteem it a *senseless Farzon*, and consequently it may tempt him to despise the *Proposal*: I'm perswaded, if there's any bottom to work upon, 'twill engage him in a more close and clearer Way of *Thinking*, as well as *Arguing*, and prevent those *Blunders* and *Confusions*, which
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the want of it seems to have introduced.

There now remains nothing to be offered to this *Gentleman*, or my *Reader*, but a *short Reply* to the *Close* of his *Preface*, [Edit. 2.] where he labours to dissemble his *Malice*, or *Envy*, to the *Clergy*; he fancies he has wiped off *all*, by dividing the *Body*, and marking out *some*, under his own *scurrilous Names* and *Characters*. But in one word, if he esteems a *zealous Vindication* of the *Doctrines*, or *Discipline* of the *Establis'd Church* of *England*, a *driving on a meer Trade in Religion*, and *building an unjust Authority upon the abused Consciences of the Laity*; or, if he calls those *corrupt Clergy-men*, that account *some Doctrines in Christianity mysterious*. [See Page 28, 29, 30.] (All which he manifestly suggests.) Then, I presume, every one that pretends to be a *Clergy-man* of this *CHURCH*, will reckon himself one of his *professed Enemies*. Page 30. Tho' not for telling him the *Truth*. Page 20. And I can promise him, they

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they will be so far from dreading his *Censures*, or *Characters*, that rather than be accounted *Wise*, or *Sincere*, [Page 31.] by embracing his *Notions*, they'll think it no Injury to them, to be Distinguish'd by all the *Marks* his *Wit* or *Malice*, he, on this Account, can fix upon 'em.

T H E

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*Books Printed for Alex. Bosvile, at
the Dial against St. Dunstan's Church,
in Fleet-street.*

AN Help and Exhortation to Worthy Communicating: or, a Treatise describing the Meaning, Worthy Reception, Duty, and Benefits of the Holy Sacrament. And Answering the Doubts of Conscience, and other Reasons, which most generally detain Men from it. Together with suitable Devotions added. By J. Kettlewell, late Vicar of Coles-hill, in Warwick.

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C E R-

CERTAIN
Christian Doctrines,

Properly call'd

Mysteries;

And to be Esteem'd Above

REASON, &c.

BEFORE I make any Formal
 Returns to the Positions ad-
 vanc'd by this *Zealous Advo-*
cate for R E A S O N, I shall endea-
 vour to fix or state the several Mea-
 sures and Principles of *Human Know-*
ledge; I mean, with respect to the
Objects of it, as it includes the Know-
 ledge of Objects of Sence, of Corpo-
 B real

Certain Christian Doctrines,
 real and Spiritual Substances, of Finite and Infinite, and of Revealed Truths.

And, first, I can freely grant (what has cost our Adversary some Pages to prove,) *viz.* [“That nothing in Nature can come to our Knowledge, but by some of these four Means, *viz.* the Experience of the *Senses*, the Experience of the *Mind*, *Humane* and *Divine Revelation*, *Seet. 1. Cap. 3.*]

But yet I think it very absurd, to advance one Rule or Standard for every Part or Branch of *Humane Knowledge*, and thereupon form Arguments, and charge *Contradictions* and *Absurdities*, without making the least allowance or distinction, *with respect to the nature of the Object, or the methods of knowing it.* Here is the Source of all our Adversary's Mistakes and Miscarriages, whereby (as will anon more fully appear) he has cast a Cloud upon *Reason*, rather than improv'd its Native Lustre and Glory.

And, *First*, as for the Knowledge of *Objects of Sense*; it's certain the
 Mind

Mind of Man, the proper Seat as well as Principle of *Humane Knowledge*, is here entertain'd by the Objects of the Material World; for, *Nothing but Matter in the ordinary course of Natural Knowledge make an Impreſſion upon the outward Senſes, ſo as to tranſmit, and fix an Idea in the Mind, ſuitable to the nature of the Object.* And certainly here is the great original Stock of *Humane Knowledge*; for the Senſes are not only the ſtanding Vehicles to all thoſe Ideas, that are lodg'd in the Mind, (ſince even Faith and Revelation come by Hearing) but theſe very Ideas, if poſitive, and formed on Things and Subſtances, are little elſe but the Reſemblances of material Senſations, or the Ideas of ſome *Object of Senſe*. However, exalted and refined may be the Ideas of Angels and glorified Spirits, that have things preſented to the view of the Mind by an immediate Intuition, it's manifeſt *we* that are cloath'd with Senſes and Matter, and thoſe of a very coarſe allay, muſt have all our Ideas tinged with material Adumbrations: Theſe are that

Glass upon the Mind through which we see darkly, and that wonderfully inraffates and disguises the Images of Things. It's true, in *Objects of Sense* our Ideas must be comparatively clear and exact, because we are seated in the very heart or center of the material World, where its Objects perpetually crowd in upon our Senses, and are continually presented to our view and observation: But yet, in *Objects of Sense*, which we daily see and converse with, we can by no means pretend an adequate Knowledge; for, we cannot comprehend or penetrate into their proper Essences, or radical Substances; no, we can go no further than Properties, Powers, or Faculties, that discover themselves in their Effects, strike the Senses, and leave an Impression, whence a distinct Idea is form'd. Again, We cannot pretend to discover the true Modes of these Properties, Powers, or Faculties, so as to discern wherein the precise Nature of 'em consists; for, at least, we can only resemble it by some Ideas that are form'd

form'd by the noblest of Senses, that of *Seeing* ; thus of *Smells*, and *Tastes*, and the like : So that we see the highest Philosophical Exercitations, even in matters of Sense, are at last wrap'd up in that we can justly call a MYSTERY. Its true, *Objects of Sense*, tho' form'd from Effects and Properties, create a very certain and indisputable Knowledge, because confirm'd by daily and continued Observation, and because the proper Objects of that part, which (as before concluded) is not only the Vehicle, but first *Elaboratory* of all *Ideas* ; I mean the outward Senses. And therefore, in *Objects of Sense*, we must receive and embrace a *Thing* as it presents itself to the view of our Senses, since we are assur'd, that G O D has appointed no other way of communicating matters of this nature to Mankind. And to receive an *Object of Sense* contrary to the Testimony of all our Senses, (tho' upon the pretended Authority of *Revelation*) must overturn all the Measures and Principles of *Humane Knowledge*, obliterate the No-

tices and Distinctions of *Truth* and *Error*, raze the prime Faculties and Motrements of *Reason*, and reduce Man, the Glory of the Creation, and GOD's Image and Representative, infinitely below the level of *Brutes* that perish. *For this reason we may reject the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, notwithstanding the highest Pretences to Miracle or Mystery, since it implies a Contradiction of the Testimony of all our Senses in matters of Sense.*

But, *Secondly*, let us consider *Humane Knowledge* as engag'd about the Objects of the Spiritual World, or Spiritual or Immaterial Beings; for this must very much alter the Scene of *Knowledges*, and fix it upon new Measures and Principles.

And, *1st*, It's indisputably evident, that our Knowledge of Spirits is of a mix'd nature, since it takes its rise partly from the Powers of *Natural Reason*, and partly from *Revelation*. The Knowledge of God and our own Souls, may in some measure be traced from the Powers of *Natural Reason*. The
Frame

Frame of our own Beings, as well as that of the Universe, will instruct us, That there must be an Eternal, All-wise, and All-powerful Mover, agreeable to the Sacred Language: The invisible things of Him from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead, *Rom. i. 20.* but as for the Existence of other Beings, we call Spirits, or their Orders and Societies, we must wholly receive it from *Revelation*. Again; As for the Nature and Ideas of a Spirit, this must certainly rest on the Instructions of *Reason* and *Revelation*; and after the best that can be given, God knows, our Attainments are very lame and imperfect; the excellency of our own Faculties and Operations tell us, That we are acted by a Principle within, that must be highly distinct from Matter, or least, that we see and handle much more from that Great GOD, whose Workmanship is this very *Reason* that thus dictates. This very Argument suffi-

ciently instructs us, We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone graven by Art and Man's Device, *Acts* xvii. 29.

But now, tho' from good Arguments we may conclude, That a *Spirit* is a Being somewhat distinct from *Matter*, yet *our most exalted Idea will be but a meer Negative, or if Positive, a Resemblance of a refined Aerial kind of Matter*; so that our Ideas of a Spirit is much more abstruse, imperfect, and conjectural than that of a Body, notwithstanding the utmost assistances of *Revelation*.

And here I'm oblig'd to make some Returns to what this *Infallible Reasoner*, with the Authority of a Great Man on his side (as he calls him), has deliver'd on the Subject; it amounts to this: We have as clear an Idea of *Spirits* as *Bodies*, since both are only to be known by their Properties, and the Properties of a *Spirit* are as clear as those of a *Body*. See *Sect. 3. Cap. 2. N. 16, 17, 19.* But, with Submissi-
on

on to the Infallible Chair, though some Properties which belong to those Beings we call *Spirits*, are clearly known and agreed upon, yet they are not so many, nor yet so distinguishing as those of *Bodies*; for, besides the Properties of particular *Bodies*, that distinguish each other, there are Properties certainly known, that belong to a *Body* as a *Body*, and distinguish it from *Spirit*, and every Being that can be imagined; such are extension of Parts, and a Faculty of possessing a Place in proportion to 'em. These are for the most part Objects of Sense, and Self-evident; *but we cannot decipher or determine any peculiar Properties that belong to a Spirit as a Spirit, and distinguish it from Body or Matter, and every thing else.* We may indeed conceive *Spirits* as Finite Beings, by the resemblance of *Bodies*, and consequently make 'em exist in a place, and possess sometimes one place, and sometimes another; but we can form no Idea how they exist in places, as we do of *Bodies*. As for *Thinking, Reasoning,*

ing, and *Willing*, these seem to be too remote, to be the distinguishing Properties of a *Spiritual Substance* as such, being Faculties that seem to flow after its Radical or Original Properties are given. I am sure they cannot be so in the Opinion of my Author's Great Man, since in one place he tells us, [It's impossible without Revelation to discover (whether Omnipotency has not given to some Systems of matter fitly dispos'd) a Power to perceive or think. — And again, I see no Contradiction in it, That the first Eternal Thinking, Being, or Omnipotent Spirit, should, if he pleas'd, give to certain Systems of created senseless Matter, put together as he thinks fit, some degrees of Sense, Perception, and Thought.]

Lock's *Human Understanding*, Lib. 4. Cap. 3. N. 6. And therefore I think it appears, there's a vast Difference between the Knowledge of *Spirits* and *Bodies*; insomuch that we may justly pronounce, *That no positive Ideas can be formed of Spirits, as Spiritual Substances, but what carry the*

Lock's
Human
Underst.
lib. 4.
cap. 3.

the resemblances of Matter in 'em; other Ideas must be form'd by comparing 'em with Matter, and pronouncing what they *are not*, rather than what they are.

But, *Thirdly*, let us examin the Measures and Extent of *Humane Knowledge*, with respect to the *Object*, as it is Finite or Infinite. As for the Knowledge of Finite Objects, an Estimate may be taken from what has been deliver'd on the two preceeding Arguments, the Subject of which being chiefly Finite Objects: The present Enquiry then is, after the Knowledge of Infinite Objects; and here certainly the Nature of the Being that *thinks* and *knows*, will determine the Case, I mean, demonstrate the *Imperfection of Humane Knowledge*; for *it's an Absurdity in Terms, as well as in the Nature of the Thing, to imagine that a Finite Mind should gain a perfect Comprehension of an Infinite Being*; insomuch, that it seems no Presumption to affirm, That G O D, by vertue of His Omnipotence, after He hath instated us in
the

the Beatifick Vision, and discover'd things that *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor Heart conceiv'd*; or, in a word, after we have seen Him as He is, cannot possess us with an adequate Idea of His Immense and Infinite Being: So that with respect to the Godhead we must affirm, That our Ideas are made up of Negatives, and consequently with *Clemens Alex.* affirm, That we rather know God by concealing what *He is not*, than what *He is*: * Or, at least, if we attempt any positive Conceptions, we are forced to shadow 'em forth by some Finite Ideas which we have taken up, and are already implanted in us. Thus the Divine Attribute of Wisdom we are forc'd to resemble by a Faculty of *Discerning* and *Comprehending*, infinitely surpassing the Sphere of *Humane Knowledge*. Thus the Immensity of God, by a vast space, or an Idea that is without Bounds or Limits, or is not to be circumscrib'd.

Thus

* ὅς ἐστιν ὁ δὲ μὴ ἐστὶ γινώσκοντες.

Strom. lib. 5.

Thus Eternity, by an endless Succession of Time. Thus we see, after our nicest Conceptions, and after the most accurate Characters and Descriptions from *Revelation* it self, we are forced to call in *Finite Objects*, and measure the Blessed Attributes of our Creator by *Finite Ideas*; an Undertaking so unworthy of him, that it seems to be a piece of petty *Larceny*, or rather a lesser sort of *Idolatry*, as 'tis a kind of Representation of the Invisible God, by things that are seen, by a kind of *Gold*, or *Wood*, or *Stone*, graved in the shallow Understandings of Impotent Men. Here our Weakness, our Blindness, plainly discovers it self; for tho' Knowledge in *Finite Objects* may appear bright and shining, here it must suffer an Eclipse, and lye confounded in depth of *Mystery*; and, in a word, humbly make *St. Paul's* Recognition: *O the depth of the Riches of the Wisdom, and Power, and Immenseness of God! how unsearchable, &c.*

But,

But, *Fourthly*, let us descend to the last Stage of *Humane Knowledge*, I mean that about matters of *Revelation*. And, first, it's certain that pure Matters of *Revelation* are things of which the Mind, by its own intrinsick Light, can form no Ideas; and consequently we cannot pretend to know any thing more of them, than God in a reveal'd way is pleas'd to communicate. It's true, He seems to be obliged to communicate Himself in such a manner, that His Revelations, at least, may bear a resemblance to some of those Ideas we have already conceiv'd, or by the Power of Natural Reason can attain to. Thus does He reveal a Saviour that is God-Man, he's oblig'd to ascribe such Characters of Divinity to him, as are agreeable to the reveal'd Characters of the Godhead, and those Ideas we can form of it; and in like manner as to his Humanity; for otherwise I cannot conceive how any reveal'd Truth can be imprinted on the Mind, without Special Inspiration. But then, on the other hand, *when*
God

God publisheth a reveal'd Truth in such Characters as suffice to inform us what he intends by it, viza a Saviour that is GOD-Man, or the like, he is not oblig'd (neither is it any way requisite to the reception of a reveal'd Truth) to demonstrate the modus of the Union of the two Natures: First, Because the Subject of Revelation being Matters not attainable by Reason, and God the Author of them, as long as we have an Idea of the thing, or an Idea of what God proposes to be believ'd, the modus of it is to be placed on the Infinite Power and Veracity of God. Secondly, Because a leading Design of Revelation being to establish a Confidence in God's Power and Veracity, in order to an absolute Obedience and Worship, He did not intend to make us Philosophers, but reveal'd what was useful and necessary, and directs us to adore, when we cannot comprehend.

From what has been deliver'd we may form two or three Inferences; *1st*, With respect to this last Argument, Whatever our Attainments

ments may be in Matters of Sense and Natural Reason, it appears, that pure **Matters of Revelation** lye at a great distance from us; and consequently Knowledge cannot penetrate much beyond the Surface, since they are not only things in their own nature profound and intricate, but all our Discoveries rest on the good Will and Pleasure of GOD, that communicates 'em. And therefore, if Revelation itself tells us, we know but in part, or imperfectly, we may safely affirm it, and place all Difficulties on the Imperfections of Humane Knowledge, or the Depths and Mysteriousness of Reveal'd Truths. *2dly*, It's a notorious Absurdity to argue from Ideas of Objects of Sense, or Material Objects against Immaterial ones; or Finite against Infinite, much more against Reveal'd ones. For it manifestly appears, that the Measures of Humane Knowledge are to be taken from each respective Object; for, as every Object hath a distinct Essence or Nature, so it hath distinct Properties and Modes

Modes peculiar to its Nature ; and the Ideas we conceive of the one, may not reach or meaſure the other. This is even ſo clear, that even in Properties that are common to ſeveral Objects, ſuch as *Spirits* and *Bodies*, when apply'd to their reſpective Objects, carry no manner of Reſemblance to each other.

Thus it's an inſeparable Property of a *Spirit* and *Body* to occupy a Place, and yet the manner of exiſting in a Place is, no doubt, vaſtly different ; inſomuch, that I cannot find how any Ideas of the *Ubi* of *Bodies* can conclude any thing againſt that of *Spirits*, much leſs meaſure or define it. And, by a Parity of Reaſon, we may ſay as much of the Unity of a Body, and the Unity of an Infinite Spirit ; for the Unity of the Godhead or the Divine Eſſence may be preſerv'd, and yet communicate it ſelf to Three Perſonal Subſiſtences : and it muſt be abſurd to deny this, becauſe it will not comport with our common Ideas of the Unity of a Body. 3dly, In Matters of Revela-
C tion,

tion, it's as absurd to Argue against Reveal'd Truths, when the thing reveal'd is describ'd in such a manner, that we may know what is intended by it, because we cannot comprehend the Modus of it; since this would oblige us to reject several things, even in Objects of Sense, that are hitherto Unquestionable. What I have hitherto deliver'd, is by way of Principle; and I shall stand by it as such, in defiance of the utmost Attempts of our *assuming Reasoner*; and having laid this Foundation, I promise my self Success, in unraveling his *Arguments* and *Positions*.

And first, to take him in the order we find him, before he gives you a State of the Question, he begins with the main *Burden of his Song*, and introduces you with some Sarcastical Reflections, upon the Managements, and Maxims of *Divines*, about Religion. As if the generality of Christians had no Notion of Religion, but Mystery; and Divines unanimously owned their Ignorance about it, [*Whilst they gravely tell us, we must adore what we cannot comprehend;*] and yet

yet majestically obtrude contradictory Comments, as infallible Demonstrations of an unfathomable Mystery.

It's visible this whole Paragraph is spent upon the Clergy; for, who are to account for Mens Ignorance or absurd Notions in Religion, but those whose Business it is to instruct and remove 'em? Again; Who are to answer for Contradictions, but the Clergy, that resolve all into unfathomable Mystery, and yet by their peremptory Comments pretend to unravel all to a Demonstration? This is a Strain of impregnated Malice, that runs thro' the whole Book; where the Clergy, by Insinuation, Consequence, or downright Assertions, are charg'd with Imposture, as if they had industriously combin'd to resolve all *Religion* into *Mystery*, even to the carrying on of Contradictions: For in one place he makes it an *Asylum* or Shelter to their Ignorance; in another, an Artifice of Usurpation, to oblige the Laity to admit nothing as a *Branch of their Creed*,

till it hath been ratified from their *Confessor's Chair*. In a word, he represents 'em as Introducers of *Deism*; he might have added, *as Subverters of all Religion too*, since he makes 'em labour in nothing but Absurdities and Contradictions. And now you have the Character or Temper of the Man, and see where his poyson'd Arrows are directed. I shall with Patience, or rather Contempt, pass by all Strictures of this kind, and content myself with the Confidence of wiping off his Calumnies by confuting his Positions. To return then,

As for the Comments of some Divines, neither the Church, nor Body of the Clergy are to account for the Indiscretions which Heat or Passion has surpriz'd some of them into; but, I'm perswaded, the Comments of others will stand the Test of *Reason and Argument*, to establish those Truths we call MYSTERIES, better than those of *his* Faction or Perswasion, to shake or overturn 'em.

As for the Maxim that instructs

us to *Adore what we cannot Comprehend*, I think it's extreamly proper where we can prove a *Mystery*; for if God recommends an Article of Faith that exceeds the Comprehension of a Finite Mind, we may rest satisfied with an imperfect Idea, (even tho' it be no more than what is needful to point out to us what God intends by it) and then surrender our Judgments to His Infinite Veracity for the rest: A considerable Instance of Obedience (even the Obedience of *Faith*) as well as Adoration.

After this, he presents us with the Opinions of some particular Persons, or, at least, the Fictions of his own Brain, concerning the Authority of *Fathers, Councils, and Scripture*, and the Rules of interpreting it: But I'm concern'd to assign what Deference is to be paid to *Fathers* or *Councils*, or what Rules to be observ'd in interpreting *Scripture*, till he thinks fit to charge our *Constitution with Error in these matters*. This is foreign to the Argument we are now engag'd in. The next

thing he presents us with, is, Two Opinions of nameless Parties concerning the Use of *Reason* in Religion, and the *Sence of Scripture*; and, at last, makes all sides (that differ from his Notions) joyn in this Position, (for I can put no other gloss on his words, when he affirms) That both from different Principles agree, [*That several Doctrines of the New Testament belong no further to the Enquiries of Reason, than to prove them Divinely reveal'd; and, that they are properly Mysteries still, Ib. N. 6.*] That there are Doctrines in the New Testament that may be properly call'd *Mysteries* still, I do not question; but I can evince in the Sequel of this Tract. But I cannot find where the Church of *England* has declar'd herself, That Reason hath nothing to do with some Reveal'd Doctrines, but only to prove them divinely reveal'd; for, certainly, *Faith it self is a rational Assent to a Divine Truth; and Reason will not only be concern'd to enquire and prove, whether God hath deliver'd it, but to form some Idea* (tho'

(tho' an imperfect one) of the Nature of this Truth; at least, such an Idea as will convince us what it is God proposes to our Relief.

Else we assent to we know not what. But after the utmost Researches of Reason, our very Reason may inform us, that there may be a great deal in this Truth or Doctrine, with respect to the Nature or Modes of the thing, which She can by no means comprehend, and consequently may still be justly accounted a *Mystery*.

And now we come to his own Positions: [*On the contrary we hold, — That nothing reveal'd, whether as to its manner or existence, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phænomena of Nature; and that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it, and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly called a MYSTERY.* This he proposes as the State of the Question, agreeable to the Title of his Book, and consequently all that follows is only a confirmation or making good

N. 7.

of this Position. I must confess, I should be so fair to him, as to wait his Arguments; but because nothing shall stick upon the Reader, I shall make something of a return to such Decretory Assertions, in the order we find them:

And, *First*, this great Reasoner seems to play the Sophister, and express himself in a very ambiguous manner: He tells us, That no Reveal'd Truth is exempted from the Disquisitions of Reason. And truly, if he intends no more, than that the sublimest Reveal'd Truths may be examin'd by Reason, as far as she is able to comprehend them, we shall entirely joyn with him; for Revelation is thus far an Address to the Reason of Mankind, and she may lawfully endeavour to discover and conceive as much of their manner and existence as possible; *Provided she does not reject what she cannot comprehend, and that too upon this very Argument; Because she cannot comprehend the whole Manner and Existence of them.*

Thus far Reason may be concern'd,
and

and yet Reveal'd Truths may be juſtly ſaid to be above Reaſon, and myſterious, and conſequently his Poſitions do by no means answer his Deſign, which is to prove, That Nothing is myſterious, or above Reaſon.

But if he intends, that Matters of Revelation, both with reſpect to their Manner and Exiſtence, may be ſcann'd and comprehended by Reaſon, as eaſily as the *Phænomena* of Nature; this we utterly deny, and with very good reaſon too: 1^{ſt}, Be-
 cauſe there's no connexion in the Conſequence, the *Phænomena* of Nature are often Objects of Senſe, and of a finite nature: But there are reveal'd matters that are in their very frame ſpiritual and infinite, and conſequently not to be comprehended by a finite Mind or Reaſon, *much leſs with that eaſe and clearneſs that Objects of Senſe are convey'd to the Mind.* Again, Matters of Senſe are knowable and comprehenſible by the Powers of Natural Reaſon; but there are Matters of *Revelation* that are not only incomprehenſible in
 their

their own nature, but knowable no further than God is pleas'd to communicate or impart to us. This is clear from what has been already laid down and concluded, and therefore this can be no Consequence ; the *Phænomena* of Nature are easily comprehensible, therefore all matters of *Revelation* are so. This is so absurd, that I do not question but I shall make it appear in the Sequel of this Discourse, " That there are some " Matters of Revelation, which if " scann'd by Ideas of Objects of " Sence, carry the appearance of " Contradictions ; and yet this can " be no Argument against the Truth " of 'em, or that we are mistaken in " the purport of the Holy Ghost, (as " the *Socinians* would have it) when " what we contend for is represent- " ed in the clearest Characters and " Descriptions. And yet, this is the top of our Adversary's Reasonings. But, 2dly, as for Reveal'd Matters being *mysterious*, or *above Reason*, it's already concluded, That the radical Essence of Objects of Sence, and much more the Modes of their Properties,

or

or their Exiſtence, are above the Comprehension of Reaſon: If ſo, what hath been deliver'd upon Matters of *Revelation*, will oblige us to conclude, againſt our Adverſary, " That they cannot be fully comprehended in their Nature or Exiſtence, much leſs in the *Modus* of it; and conſequently, that they are in the higheſt ſence *mysterious*, and above Reaſon.

But to proceed, in the next place he entertains you, purſuant to the Notions of his great Man, with a large account what Reaſon is, and what ſhe is not; the Means of Information, and Ground-Perſwaſion: And I muſt freely own, that I can for the moſt part agree with him, and his great Man; at leaſt it is not requiſite to enter upon a nice Examination of every Paragraph, becauſe I find he makes no particular Application of what he has ſo elaborately delivered in ſeveral Chapters, to prove his main Deſign. He tells us, Chap. 4. Sect. 1. [*That the Ground of Perſwaſion is Evidence, and Evidence he defines, an exact Conformity of our Ideas*

*Ideas, or Thoughts, with their Objects, or Things we think upon.] The Description, I think, is well enough; but all this concludes nothing to prove what he contends for, viz. That nothing is above Reason; for the imperfect Ideas of Infinite and Incomprehensible Beings, must carry a Resemblance, or Conformity to the Object, or the Characters of an Incomprehensible Being; and yet it does not follow, but our Ideas are imperfect, and that there is a great deal in the Object, of which we cannot form any clear Idea. Indeed, if this were not so, he might justly infer, That there's nothing above Reason in Revelation. In a word, since he hath so industriously stated the Nature of Reason and Humane Knowledge, he should have proved, *That there are no degrees of Evidence, or Knowledge, with respect to the Nature of the Object, or Means of Information: That we have as clear and compleat an Idea of Infinite Beings as Finite, of an Infinite Spirit as an Object of Sense: That reveal'd Objects occur by the same way as Objects of Sense**

ſence do; or, That the Extent of reveal'd Knowledge, does not depend on the Good Will and Pleaſure of God, in communicating what he pleaſeth on every Object. This would have clear'd off all Diſpute, and proved what he thinks he's able to evince, *viz.* That the Evidence of all the Ideas of the Operations of the Mind, is as infallible as our own Being, *Cap. 4. N. 14.* That what is reveal'd in Religion, may be as eaſily comprehended, and found as conſiſtent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, Water, or the like, *ſect. 3. Cap. 2. N. 12.*] Or, in a word, that there's nothing in Religion, or Revelation myſterious, or above Reaſon. The two latter of theſe Paradoxes will receive ſuch Replies as are proper in the Sequel of this Diſcourſe; but I cannot paſs the firſt without a few Remarks: And, to put the moſt favourable Conſtruction on an Ambiguous Aſſertion, I preſume, he affirms, *That the Evidence of our Ideas which we form of the ſeveral Acts or Operations of the Mind, (viz. Thinking, Contemplating, Know-*
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*Ideas, or Thoughts, with their Objects, or Things we think upon.] The Description, I think, is well enough; but all this concludes nothing to prove what he contends for, viz. That nothing is above Reason; for the imperfect Ideas of Infinite and Incomprehensible Beings, must carry a Resemblance, or Conformity to the Object, or the Characters of an Incomprehensible Being; and yet it does not follow, but our Ideas are imperfect, and that there is a great deal in the Object, of which we cannot form any clear Idea. Indeed, if this were not so, he might justly infer, That there's nothing above Reason in Revelation. In a word, since he hath so industriously stated the Nature of Reason and Humane Knowledge, he should have proved, *That there are no degrees of Evidence, or Knowledge, with respect to the Nature of the Object, or Means of Information: That we have as clear and compleat an Idea of Infinite Beings as Finite, of an Infinite Spirit as an Object of Sense: That reveal'd Objects occur by the same way as Objects of Sense**

Sence do; or, That the Extent of reveal'd Knowledge, does not depend on the Good Will and Pleasure of God, in communicating what he pleaseth on every Object. This would have clear'd off all Diſpute, and proved what he thinks he's able to evince, *viz.* That the Evidence of all the Ideas of the Operations of the Mind, is as infallible as our own Being, *Cap. 4. N. 14.* That what is reveal'd in Religion, may be as eaſily comprehended, and found as conſiſtent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, Water, or the like, *Sect. 3. Cap. 2. N. 12.*] Or, in a word, that there's nothing in Religion, or Revelation myſterious, or above Reason. The two latter of theſe Paradoxes will receive ſuch Replies as are proper in the Sequel of this Diſcourſe; but I cannot paſs the firſt without a few Remarks: And, to put the moſt favourable Conſtruction on an Ambiguous Aſſertion, I preſume, he affirms, That *the Evidence of our Ideas which we form of the ſeveral Acts or Operations of the Mind,* (*viz. Thinking, Contemplating, Know-*
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ing or Comprehending) are as infallible as that of our Beings. This is a Maxim advanc'd to prove, That we are to have the same Evidence in all speculative Ideas, and consequently in all Ideas of pure Matters of Revelation ; for this is his Application of it : [*Let us now but strictly require this Evidence in all the Agreements and Disagreements of our Ideas in Things meerly speculative, &c. Ib.*] To shew the Weakness or Inconclusiveness of his Arguments, and the Falseness of his Positions, I shall instance in the general Act or Operation of the Mind, that of *Thinking*. And,

First, If he intends no more than that we have an Evidence (that we *think*, when we actually *think*, or that we have a Faculty to *think*) as infallible as that of our *Being*, I will easily joyn with him : But, can this be an Argument, that all our Ideas of Speculative Objects, particularly of all Matters of Revelation, (that are form'd by *Thinking*) rest upon an Evidence as clear as that of our *Being* ? Again, If he contends for an Idea of the *Nature of Thinking*, that
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carries an Evidence in it, as clear and infallible as that of our *Being*; I ſay, we cannot form an Idea of the *Nature of Thought*, but by retreating to ſome particular Inſtance or Object of *Thought*, and reflecting how the *Mind* exerciſes itſelf upon it; and before we can form a perfect Idea of the *Nature of Thought*, we muſt comprehend or diſcern the *manner* of the performance, and this will carry us into a great many Difficulties and Conjectures. We may indeed conclude, that *Thought* requires the application of the Object to the Mind, or rather the application of the Mind to the Object, which may juſtly be called *Attention*. Thus far the Idea of *Thinking* is clear and evident: But then, if we enquire into the *manner* how this or that Object is communicated or apply'd to the Mind, this ſeems to be inconceivable, even in Objects of Senſe; for, who can pretend to deſcribe how Material Objects are imprinted on an Immaterial Soul? Therefore we may conclude, that the Ideas we can form of the *Nature of Thinking*, and conſequently
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of the Operations of the Mind, do not carry an Evidence in 'em as infallible as that of our Being.

But further ; Admit we, that we could describe the precise *Modus* of the *Nature of Thinking*, and consequently had an Idea that carries as much Evidence in it as that of our Existence, it's absurd to conclude, that the Mind can form Ideas of the highest Speculations equally evident and infallible. The Consequence, in plain terms, is no other than this, Because the Evidence of the Ideas of one particular Object is infallible, therefore the Evidence of the Ideas of every Object is so. And certainly this is a Position that must pronounce all our Ideas equally clear and perfect, and the Means of Information infallible, and consequently there can be no Objects falsely represented to the Mind, nor no Ideas false or imperfect. This is *Mystery* with a witness, or rather Positions that in his own Language are, [*The Primary and Uniterical Origin of all his Errors, Ib.*] But, I think, he sufficiently confutes himself in the following

lowing Paragraphs, when he pronounces ſome things dubious and obſcure, and allows falſe Ideas may be contracted by Precipitancy or Inattention, by Affection and Prepoſſeſſion, N. 18.

And now for the Second, where *ſect. II.* he introduces us with a Deſcription of what is contrary to Reaſon, [*viz. What is evidently repugnant to clear and diſtinct Ideas, or to our common Notions, is contrary to Reaſon.*] Now truly this I think is a very lame, imperfect, or at leaſt fallacious Deſcription, unleſs it be ballanced with ſome Limitations and Reſtrictions.

As firſt, It can only hold in Objects of the ſame Species, or Nature; *Thus we can only argue from Objects of Sence, againſt Objects of Sence, from Finite againſt finite, and from Matters of Revelation againſt pretended Matters of Revelation: For its the greateſt Abſurdity in Nature, to conclude any thing againſt any revealed Truth, or Doctrine, whoſe Object is purely Spiritual, and abſolutely Inſinite; becauſe it doth not accord with*

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Certain Christian Doctrines,

our Ideas in Objects of Sense; I'm sure the Holy Ghost instructs us better, in obliging us to compare Spiritual Things with Spiritual. A sufficient Inhibition truly against discarding reveal'd Truths by any other Ideas, then what are formed from antecedent Notices of Revelation.

Thus for our Saviour's Divinity, before we yield an Assent to it, it's requisite the Characters and Properties of the Godhead, which are in the Books of Revelation ascrib'd to the Father, with respect to the Godhead, shou'd be ascrib'd to the Son. But then when this is done, it's absurd to reject this great Truth, as contrary to Reason, upon the force of an unreasonable Consequence, formed by comparing the incomprehensible Godhead with Objects of Sense.

Thus the Son cannot be God, because it must destroy the Unity of the Godhead; for the Unity of the Godhead must be destroy'd: Why? Because such Unity and Plurality can never be admitted in Objects of Sense, and consequently not in the sub-

sublimest Matters of Revelation. But what is this but to prostitute the Glory and Majesty of the Invisible and Incomprehensible Godhead, by the vilest Representations? What is it but a making him like Gold, Wood or Stone, or Things graven by Man's Art. Certain I am, such Maxims as these are the highest Contradictions to Reason; for if they might take place, it must shake the Foundation of all Revelation, even those lively Characters which the Word of God hath given of the Godhead: *If they must be scann'd, or measured by common Notions, or Ideas that result from Objects of Sense.*

Secondly, Before we pronounce any thing contrary to Reason, we must be sure that we have a clear and perfect Comprehension of the Thing; for tho' our Ideas that are seemingly repugnant to it, be never so clear, how shall we judge of the Repugnancy, as long as we cannot pretend to a perfect Idea on both sides? This I'm sure is a very reasonable Injunction, between Objects of Sense, and Matters of Revelation; so that if God

hath delivered any revealed Truth, and by comparing it with the Ideas and Characters of other reveal'd Truths, we must conclude, he intended such a particular thing, and at the same time discern the Incomprehensibleness of it; insomuch that we cannot form an adequate Idea; it's absurd to reject it, because this imperfect Idea will not comport with certain clear Ideas in Objects of Sense. *'Here if any Difficulties, Absurdities, or Contradictions arise, Reason will direct us to place 'em upon the Weakness of our Understandings, or our imperfect way of comprehending such unfathomable Objects; and with St. Paul, engage us to cry out, Who is sufficient for these things?* And now if my Adversary will add these Limitations to his Definition (as I'm perswaded he'll be forced to do) I do not question, but I can wipe off all the Absurdities produced in the following Chapter, at least by shewing their Impertinence to the Case before us. And on this account, I pass by 'em, as well as because there's nothing in 'em, that affects any thing
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already delivered, but either confirms, or may be fairly ſolved by it. I therefore proceed to his Argument, *Seit. 2. Cap. 1. N. 4.*

The firſt thing I ſhall inſiſt upon is, [*That if any Doctrine of the New Teſtament be contrary to Reaſon, we have no manner of Idea of it: To ſay for inſtance, that a Ball is White and Black at once.*] Here he ſufficiently diſcovers himſelf; he tells us before, That whatever is repugnant to common Notions, is contrary to Reaſon; and what his common Notions are, the Inſtance before us, ſufficiently informs; that is, in plain *Engliſh*, whatever does not comport with the moſt trite Ideas of Objects of Senſe is contrary to Reaſon; and therefore the moſt ſublime revealed Truths (whoſe Objects are Spirits, and Infinite Spirits, and conſequently the Ideas we can pretend to, muſt be highly imperfect) becauſe we cannot adjust them with the moſt common Ideas of Senſe, are contrary to Reaſon. But the Abſurdity of this Aſſertion, I hope, I have ſufficiently exploded.

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But,

But, to deliver my own Sentiments of matters of this nature once for all, I do believe there's an eternal and universal Harmony in Reason, as well as things both created and uncreated. The Reason of Mankind is certainly an immediate Transcript of Infinite Reason, and all the Councils, Decrees, and Declarations of Heaven are the Dictates of Infinite Reason, and the Reason of Mankind must be establish'd upon the unalterable Rules or Measures of Infinite Reason; and therefore there can be no Ideas of Infinite Truths or Objects (provided they are compleat and perfect, such as God can conceive of Himself) which really contradict the Rules and Measures of *Humane Reason*, if she were enabl'd to comprehend 'em as clearly as her Maker.

But yet, I think, I have made it appear, that after all the Researches of Reason, there are reveal'd Objects of which we can form but very imperfect Ideas, both with respect to their *Nature, Existence, and Modus*, and yet we may form such an Idea as
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inſtructs us what God intends we ſhould believe.

From hence we may conclude,
 " That as their nature is peculiarly di-
 " ſtinguiſht from all other Beings, ſo is
 " the *Modus* of their Exiſtence: So
 that it's highly abſurd to deny our
 Aſſent to the Truth of it, becauſe
 we can form no Idea that will com-
 port with thoſe we have form'd on
Objects of Sence, and conſequently ad-
 judge it to be contrary to *Reason*.
 " This is a Contradiction to the
 " Eternal Laws of right *Reason*,
 " which, in Caſes of this nature, di-
 " rect us to fix the Abſurdity or Con-
 " trariety on the Imperfections of
 " our Underſtanding, or the Falſe-
 " neſs of the Rule, in judging *Mat-*
 " *ters of Revelation* by *Objects of*
 " *Sence*.

In a word, from what hath been
 ſaid, we may, in expreſs terms, af-
 firm, That we can form imperfect
 Ideas of *Matters of Revelation*, ſo
 far as to know what God propoſes
 to our Belief: And yet, when we
 proceed to examine the *Modus* of
 their Exiſtence, we cannot reconcile

it with the Ideas of *Objects of Sense*; and, for all this, we must not pronounce any thing of this nature contrary to *Reason*; or esteem those imperfect Ideas, no Ideas at all.

Give me leave to illustrate this matter in an Instance which the *Socinian* chuses to advance his own Hypothesis, by exploding it; I mean, the *Divinity of our Saviour*: We affirm him to be possess'd with the *Fulness of the Godhead*, because his *Divinity* is describ'd in Characters that are peculiar to the Godhead, and such as correspond with those Ideas of the Godhead as are form'd by the Assistance of *Revelation*. He rejects his *Divinity*, because he proceeds further, and examines the *Modus* of its Existence, with respect to the Unity of the Godhead, and its Union with Humane Nature; and thereupon forms a *Modus* by some common Ideas or Notions, and then compares it with other Ideas of the same rank and quality, and rejects those Ideas which Scripture has given us of his *Divinity*, by pronouncing such a *Revelation* absurd and
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contrary to Reason, becauſe the *Modus* of its Exiſtence with the Unity of the Godhead and Humanity, (a thing form'd and hammer'd out of his own ſhallow Underſtanding,) does not comport with common Ideas of *Objects of Senſe*. Here, I think, is a Complication of Abſurdities, or things that run counter to the eternal Meaſures of right Reason; the Godhead of our Bleſſed Saviour is reject'd and deny'd, as contrary to Reason, not becauſe we want Revelation for it, ſince we may read it in the cleareſt Characters; but we muſt expound theſe away, *1^{ſt}*, Becauſe we cannot comprehend the *Modus* of its Exiſtence (a thing that often exceeds our Comprehenſion) even in Philoſophical Diſquiſitions. *2^{dly}*, Becauſe we cannot form a *Modus* that comports with common Ideas or Notions in *Objects of Senſe*. " But, if Conſequences of this " nature are ſuffer'd to take place, " againſt ſuch legible Characters of " Divinity, it muſt overturn thoſe " Ideas of a GOD, which Revelation " and Natural Reason hath furniſh'd " us

“us with, since the Characters of
 “both are equally clear and un-
 “deniable.

I have dwelt too long on this Argument, but not without Design, because I would not be oblig'd to make a formal Return to every little Passage that runs against us, or dispels every Speck of a Cloud that's rais'd upon Sophistry or False Arguing : I am sure I have offer'd enough to take off the Force of what he hath suggested in the following Paragraph, N. 5. for, he's a compleat Conjuror, raises his own Devil, and then lays it, frames an Objection, and gives his own Answer to it ; it's this ; [*If any will think to evade the Difficulty, by saying, That the Ideas of certain Doctrines may be contrary indeed to common Notions, yet consistent with 'em-selves, — he's but just where he was.*] Now, I have already deliver'd the Measures of forming reveal'd Ideas, not by comparing 'em with Objects of Sence, but Spiritual Things with Spirituall : I will admit, indeed, it may be done by common Notions ; if he'll restrain his common Notions,

ons, as he docs in the cloſe of his Paragraph, or, at leaſt, with ſome Improvement added to 'em; for I can freely ſubſcribe: [*That we cannot otherwiſe diſcern His Revelations, but by their conformity with our Natural Notices of Him,*] G O D he means; or, at leaſt, thoſe Improvements we receive of Him from Revelation. And in this ſence our Saviour's Divinity is not contrary to common Notions; for we can form an Idea of it agreeable to thoſe Characters which Revelation and Natural Reason gives us of the Godhead; but, then the Difficulty lies in comprehending the Union and Exiſtence of the two Natures together, which we call the *Modus* of the thing; and this, we ſay, is not to be meaſur'd by common Notices, for, to a Finite Mind, it's Incomprehenſible: " But then it
 " is not a Doctrine of Chriſtianity,
 " that we ſhould comprehend it;
 " much leſs is it a Doctrine of Reason
 " or Chriſtianity that we ſhould ex-
 " clude or caſhier the cleareſt Cha-
 " racters of our Saviour's Divinity or
 " Incarnation from being a Doctrine
 " of

“ of Christianity, because we cannot
 “ comprehend the manner of the U-
 “ nion of the two Natures, nor form
 “ any clear Idea of it, at least, such
 “ as will comport with common No-
 “ tions. It’s true, we may resemble
 it, as it is done in one of our Creeds.
 As the reasonable Soul and Flesh is
One Man, so G O D and Man is *One*
 CHRIST ; but we do not advance a
 Similitude into a compleat Idea, or
 an Article of Faith.

But, to offer a word or two more,
 if this method of Arguing may be
 admitted, I cannot conceive but it
 must explode the Belief of the Soul,
 or any Principle distinct from Mat-
 ter, because we cannot fix the *Modus*
 of its Union, or conceive an Idea of
 the manner of its incessant Inter-
 courses with the Body.

To conclude this Argument, from
 what is said, I think here’s enough
 to defeat our Adversary’s Triumphs,
 even over his own Objection ; for,
 we may safely affirm, That as the
 Nature of the Godhead is distin-
 guish’d by Properties peculiar to it
 self, so we may justly conclude, that
 it

it has a manner of Exiſtence with Humanity ſo peculiar to itſelf, that we muſt not pretend to comprehend it, by comparing it with Objects of Senſe; and yet we can freely own, that there's neither Neceſſity nor Poſſibility of its being comprehend- ed by us, or of determining what is the precise *Modus* of it.

And thus much of his Notion of *Self-conſiſtence*. And as for his Sar- caſtical prophane way of Arguing, when he tells us, That *Four may be cal- led Five in Heaven*; he might know, ' That *Numbers* are only *empty Deno- minations*, and *no Arguments* to be ' form'd from 'em, but as apply'd to ' *Things*; and then, if we conſider ' Heavenly Objects with reſpect to ' the manner of their Exiſtence, a ' *Unity* and a *Trinity* may be con- ' ſiſtent, for any thing he knows to ' the contrary. And this is ſufficient to prevent any modeſt Man from pronouncing Contradictions upon ſuch unfathomable Truths, by mea- ſuring their *Modus* by Common No- tions, things that exceed our Com- prehenſion as much as they are be-
sides

sides the Business of our Curiosity or Faith. Here we may discern the Origin of his ill Reasonings *to be want of distinguishing Things*, I mean the *Being* of a *Thing*, and the *Manner* of its *Existence*, with respect to itself, or as 'tis united to something else.

From hence I pass to *N. 9.* for nothing intervenes that directly concerns the present Controversie, or, at least, has not had a Reply to it. And here I cannot joyn with him, when he affirms, That a *seeming Contradiction*, (*even in Matters of Revelation*) *is to us as much as a real one*; for, I think, the Difference is palpable in all cases, but especially in Contradictions upon the *Nature of Things*; for 'We call that a *seeming Contradiction*, when there's a Repugnancy discovered, but we have not a clear and perfect Conviction of it: And, I suppose, this must arise for want of a clear and perfect Idea of each Term, or rather Object, of the Contradiction; and, till this is gain'd, Reason must suspend, and neither determine that she is in the right or wrong, till fresh Evidence offers to
turn

turn the Scale. But now, a *real Contradiction*, or rather a *clear Contradiction*, (for it ſhould paſs under this Name with reſpect to our knowledge of it) is, “When we have a clear “and unquestionable Idea of both “parts of it, or both Objects, and “thence conceive an irreconcilable “Repugnancy. But now, in matters of pure Revelation, whoſe Nature is ſpiritual and infinite, I cannot ſee how Reaſon can direct us to pronounce or determine *real* or *clear Contradictions* between them and Common Notions, becauſe we cannot pretend to an *adequate* or *clear Idea*; I mean, that which is comparatively ſo, with reſpect to thoſe of *Objects of Senſe*, and conſequently cannot decree what *real Repugnancy* lies between them: And therefore, if ſeeming Contradictions or Difficulties ariſe, by comparing *reveal'd Truths* with common *Ideas* or *Notions*, Reaſon cannot (as this Author would have it) pronounce a *real Contradiction*, and ſuſpect there can be no *reveal'd Truth*, eſpecially when there are the cleareſt Characters of the thing

thing corresponding with *Ideas* of the same nature. "Here Reason must oblige us to place the Contradictions on our Inabilities in comprehending Matters of this nature, and yield an Assent upon the Authority of Infinite Power and Veracity: For when Revelation has set forth the thing in the clearest Characters, and the very same in which the fundamental Article of all Revelation is represented to us, I mean that of the Godhead, if seeming Contradictions must be suffer'd to discard it, it's impossible we can yield any Assent to the Being of a GOD; for, where the Characters are as clear for one as the other, and both rest on the same Authority, that of *Revelations* to dispute the one, must call in question the other.

Proceed we, in the next place, to consider what is deliver'd on the Authority of *Revelation*, he means that which is Divine, *Cap. 2. N. 11*. And here I cannot be reconcil'd to the Distinction he gives us: [*Revelation is not a necessitating Motive of Assent,*
but

but a Mean of Information.] Now, truly I can see no Absurdity in saying, That the same thing may be a Mean of Information, and a Motive of an Assent too, for an Information carries an Assent along with it proportionable to the Credit or Authority of the Informer. Now *Revelation* is certainly a Mean of *Information*, since it presents us with new Objects, which *Natural Reason* could never discover: But, besides this, it is an *Information* that proceeds from *Infinite Veracity*, attended with *Infinite Power*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*: Herein it's distinguish'd from Human Revelation; And therefore, when once we are assur'd (so as to yield a firm Assent) that such a particular Article is reveal'd, it becomes the most necessitating Motive of Assent; I mean, to the Truth of it; because, this being granted, here's *Infinite Veracity*, *Wisdom*, *Power* and *Goodness* against our *Imperfect Conceptions*, and the seeming Difficulties founded in 'em. When once we assent or yield it to be Divine Revelation, I think, we may safely affirm, against this Reasoner,

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[We may believe purely upon his Word, without Evidence, (at least such as he requires) in the things 'emfelves]. Here the Authority of him that speaks; not my Conception of the thing, or what he says; is the Ground of my Perswasion].

But, to proceed, as for what this Reasoner says of God's Omnipotence and Contradictions, *N. 13.* no one is so silly to imagine, that real Contradictions are an Object of Omnipotence; but there may be Contradictions which we apprehend as real, that in truth are but seeming ones, and particularly when we cannot fully comprehend the nature of both the Terms or Objects; and it's already concluded, that in matters of Revelation Reason will often direct us to suspect our Judgments, and esteem 'em as such: And then, I hope, there's "no Absurdity in Pronouncing, seeming Contradictions and Impossibilities, a proper Subject of God's Omnipotence: Thus far our Saviour will bear us out, for *all things are possible with God*, Matt. xix. 26.

But, to pursue him a little further, he tells us, *N. 16.* speaking of God's
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Revelations, [*His Words must be intelligible, and the Matter possible. And as for unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of G O D, than from that of Man, for the conceiv'd Ideas of Things are the only Subjects of believing, and therefore all Matters reveal'd by G O D or Man, must be equally intelligible and possible: We are then to expect the same degree of Perspicuity* (he means, with respect to the knowledge of the Object) *from G O D as from Man, tho' more of Certitude from the first than the last: he means with respect to the Veracity of the Publisher.*]

Answ. What has already been deliver'd upon Matters of Revelation, I hope, will satisfie any reasonable Man, how far a reveal'd Truth is requir'd to be intelligible. It's concluded, GOD has discover'd so much of the Nature of reveal'd Truths as is useful or necessary; and consequently, He has, at least, discover'd so much as is sufficient to inform us, upon Principles of Revelation, what He proposes to our Belief, but He did not intend to make us Philosophers, so as

to enable us to comprehend the *Modus* of reveal'd Truths, or form an Idea of the Manner of Existence, in order to believe the Truth of 'em. This we cannot pretend even in Physical Disquisitions; nay, I think, it's justly concluded, that in Matters of Revelation, which are for the most part Spiritual and Infinite, we are not to dispute the Possibility of their Existence, by measuring 'em by *Objects of Sense*; for, in reality, this is the same with comprehending the *Modus* of their Existence, “ since we cannot “ absolutely declare against the Possi- “ bility of their Existence, without a “ Faculty of comprehending and de- “ termining the *Modus* of it, and pas- “ sing an Estimate upon it as absurd “ and impossible: And therefore we “ say, That Matters of Revelation are “ to be understood so far as to con- “ ceive what GOD proposes to our “ Belief, but not to comprehend the “ *Modus* of their Existence; such *Ideas* “ are not the necessary *Subjects* of “ *Faith*.

Again, In Humane Revelation the Object is *Matters of Fact*, and things we

we attain to by the Teſtimony of our Senſes, and conſequently are things that lye within the proper Verge of Humane Underſtanding.

Again, They are Discoveries made by Perſons upon the ſame level with ourſelves, and, conſequently, ſuch as are not only liable to be miſtaken, but may ſometimes induſtriouſly lead others into Miſtakes. And both theſe are Arguments that will engage us to demand an abſolute Comprehension of the Nature of the Thing, and all its Circumſtances; ſo that before we can come to a final Determination, or yield an Aſſent to the Truth of any ſuch Relation, “ We muſt comprehend the Nature of it ſo exactly, “ as to be able to judge, not only of “ the Poſſibility, but Probability of “ it. And, I hope, no one can have the Face to *demand* all this Evidence from GOD. Therefore we may conclude, againſt our Majeſterial Reaſoner, That the ſame degree of Perſpicuity is not requir'd from GOD, as from Man. In a word, if we cannot form a perfect Idea of reveal'd Truths, much leſs of the *Modus* of their Exi-

stence, we cannot judge of the Possibility of 'em: If indeed we were able to form an Idea of the *Modus* of their Existence, that will comport with common Notions, tho' this be not the true *Modus*, we may safely pronounce them possible; "but we
 "cannot pretend to reject the Possi-
 "bility of 'em, unless we could judge
 "of the real *Modus*, and shew, that
 "it's absurd and impossible: Therefore we may conclude, that all Matters reveal'd by GOD or Man, are not requir'd to be equally intelligible and possible.

But, to proceed, as for those Instances of Scripture, that follow in this or the next Chapter, to prove Christianity a rational intelligible Religion; they only prove, That Reason is a concurring Instrument in embracing all religious Truths, not by teaching us to comprehend the Nature of 'em, but to engage our Assent, where we cannot fully comprehend upon rational Motives and Convictions: "And we think we
 "act upon rational Motives and
 "Convictions in Matters of Revela-
 "tion,

“ tion, when we know as much of
“ the thing as ſatisfies us, what it is
“ G O D propoſes to our belief, and
“ yet find ſome things contain'd in
“ 'em incomprehenſible in their own
“ nature, and rely upon God's Vera-
“ city, Power, Wiſdom, and Good-
“ neſs, rather than reject the whole,
“ becauſe we know but in part. Nay
further, in the caſe of Miracles, we
grant, that Reaſon may judge of the
reality of 'em, becauſe they are Ob-
jects of Sence, and are to be examin'd
by the Teſtimony of the Senſes, by
Ideas of Objects of Sence, and the
Exercitations of Reaſon upon 'em,
and becauſe Miracles are the uncon-
troulable Demonſtrations of the Spi-
rit, or Means of Conviction, for pro-
ving the Divine Original of Revela-
tion; “ And we can freely grant, that
“ *Reaſon* muſt act by common No-
“ tions, to prove *Revelation* to be tru-
“ ly Divine: But when this is done,
there's no Conſequence that Reaſon
muſt ſtill meaſure reveal'd Truths by
common Notions, and reject 'em if
ſhe cannot fully comprehend 'em, or
if ſhe cannot make 'em comport with
common Notions; which is the thing

our Adversary labours to prove.

The remaining Instances, which only declare the Perspicuity of the *Moral Law* or *Christian Precepts*, an Ingenious Reader will presently discern how foreign and impertinent they are to his Design.

At the same rate he trifles, when he raises an Objection from the Corruption of *Humane Reason*; as if, by making his own Answers and Objections, he had vanquish'd all our Arguments, gain'd the Field, and might triumphantly maintain, *That there's nothing in the Christian Religion mysterious, or above Reason*; for, I do not anywhere find the Ch. of *England* fixes the Controversie on this Bottom, and therefore this is Reply enough to two of his Chapters, viz. 3, 4.

SECT. III. And now we come to the Third Section, where we are introduc'd with an Account of what's *mysterious* and *above Reason*. I shall for the most part take his own Accounts of it, and therefore shall not much dispute any thing in the first Chapt. only I cannot forbear to remark, how lame or imperfect, or, at least, industriously equi-

equivocal, all his Descriptions are : He gives us two Significations of a *Mystery*, the first I shall not examin ; his second is, (I suppose he speaks his own Opinion, else he should have declar'd the contrary) [*It is made to signify a thing of its own nature inconceivable, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Ideas, tho' it be never so much reveal'd.*] Indeed, I think the first part of this Description is a *Mystery* ; tho', I suppose, he means, in the nature of the thing, or by reason of its Immensity, it's inconceivable to us, or with respect to Humane Comprehension ; but then, who knows how far he intends to carry this, I mean, represent a *Mystery* inconceivable? If he intends it so as that we can form no *manner of Idea* of it, then he imposes a manifest Absurdity upon the World ; for no one ever called that a MYSTERY that we could have no Notion of ; for, *such a thing may be as well Nothing, as Mystery, for any thing we can tell.* And therefore *Mystery*, at least, supposes an *Imperfect or Inadequate Idea*, (as appears from all those Instances I have hitherto

to produc'd) otherwise we could not know what God proposes to our Belief. But then, if we enquire further into the thing, and endeavour to unravel the *Modus* of its Existence, we can either form no distinct Idea, or, at least, none that will comport with common Notions. And thus far we affirm, That *Mysteries* are not to be judg'd of by our *ordinary Faculties* and *Ideas*, tho' never so clearly reveal'd. N. 1.

I proceed to *Chap. 2.* where, after having promis'd a wonderful Perspicuity in the Case before him, he affirms, [*That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct View of all its Properties at once; for then every thing would be a Mystery.*] Now truly I'm much of his Mind, for I'm perswaded that no Finite Understanding can conceive all the several Properties of any one Being, at once in a distinct view: This is the Peculiar of an All-wise GOD; and if an adequate Idea must imply a distinct view of every Property at once, and Mystery opposed to it, every thing must be

be a Myſtery to every intelligent Being but GOD: So that here's a *No-tion* rais'd, that proves nothing, and no one requires it. We will therefore paſs this as an Unphilosophical Blunder, and deſcribe an adequate Idea to be what he aims at, *viz. A clear and diſtinct Idea of the Nature and Properties of an Object.* This (he contends) cannot be fairly *opposed to MYSTERY*, becauſe, in the Knowledge of Humane Bodies, GOD has ſufficiently answer'd the Ends and Deſigns of it, by enabling us to comprehend the principal Properties of Bodies, and the Uſes of 'em: And therefore what remains cannot be MYSTERY, *N. 19, 20.* This is truly a Reason which is more cogent on the other hand, as well in Philoſophical as Reveal'd Diſquiſitions: GOD has diſcover'd, or enabl'd us to comprehend, as much as is uſeful or neceſſary in both theſe Caſes; but, after all, we can pretend no further than ſome principal Properties: And ſince *Reason* tells us, there's a great deal undiscover'd and incomprehe-nſible, we may juſtly affirm, That there

there are *Mysteries* in *Nature*, as well as *Revelation*; so that we are beholden to him for his *Argument*, tho' he had no Friendly Design in it. Indeed, if he would be content to carry us no further than the force of his *Argument* naturally tends, we should presently joyn in an amicable Accommodation, which is in other terms no more than this: "There can be no "*Mystery* in *Revelation*, (he might "have added, nor in *rerum natura*) "I mean, in this Notion of it; because we know as much as our Finite Understandings are capable of, "or as much as is necessary or useful. If this may be admitted, it's a substantial Reason to conclude against the Possibility of a *Mystery*.

But we may say there are *Mysteries*, not because we know not as much as is necessary and useful, but *because after we know the principal Properties of Things, or as much as is necessary or useful, we can discern a great deal which we cannot comprehend*. And this holds good not only in Matters of *Revelation*, but *Nature* too. Our *Adversary* confesses as much; for tho' we

we have a competent Idea of the *Properties of Bodies*, that is, as far as they are uſeful to us, yet we are not able to comprehend the *Modus* of their Operations, nor indeed the true Cauſes of a great many obvious Effects.

Again, In *reveal'd Truths* we can form, at leaſt, an imperfect Idea of what GOD propoſes to our belief. Thus we form an Idea of our *Saviour's Divinity*, from thoſe Characters which *Revelation* and *Natural Reason* gives us of the *Godhead*. We believe him to be poſſeſſ'd with the *fulneſs of the Godhead*, becauſe the ſame Characters are aſcrib'd to him that are aſcrib'd to the *Father* in reſpect of the *Godhead*; but we cannot form an Idea of the Manner of the Union of this *Divinity* with *Humane Nature*, nor its Conſiſtence with the *Unity* of the *Godhead*, at leaſt ſo as to make it comport with common Notions: So that in reſpect of the *Modus* of things, whether as to their Exiſtence or Operations, even in thoſe of *Natural Bodies*, as well as *Matters of Revelation*, there are *Myſteries* in *Nature*,
(and

Certain Christian Doctrines,
(and that properly) as well as in *Revelation*.

Our *Adversary* indeed would call this an *Inadequate Knowledge*, but nothing *Mysterious* or above Reason; but I hope to prove it a *Mystery* even in the received sense of the Word, as well as the reason of the Thing, and that too on his own *Concessions* and *Principles*. And,

1st, It's certain his *Evasions* concerning *Inadequate Ideas* will do him no service, to take off the Denominations of *Mystery*, or *above Reason*; for we affirm, That Things are *Mysterious*, and *above Reason*, because we can form but very imperfect and inadequate Ideas of 'em. "It's certainly absurd to imagine that any thing can be *mysterious*, or *above Reason*, which we are able fully to comprehend; and it's equally absurd to say, that things are *mysterious*, when we can form no Idea at all, since we can pronounce nothing when we know nothing: But, to confess, that of most things we can form but imperfect and inadequate Ideas, is to prove a thing to be *mysterious*;

“ *sterious* ; for, if we know and ac-
 “ knowledge, that our most improv'd
 “ Ideas are inadequate, we must con-
 “ clude there's something behind, ei-
 “ ther as to the *Modus* or *Rationale* of
 “ Things, which Reason cannot com-
 “ prehend. And I know no better
 denomination, than to say, That
 Things are in this respect *mysterious*,
 or *above Reason*.

To make up the strict Notion of
Mystery, we are not to consider the
 Necessity or Usefulness of what we
 cannot comprehend ; but the grand
 Question is, *Whether there are not*
Modes and Properties of Things, that
by reason of the Imperfection of Human
Understanding, or the Immensity or In-
tricacy of the Things 'emselfes, cannot
be comprehended by us ? ‘ For it is the
 ‘ Abstruseness or Inaccessibility of
 ‘ Things that make the *Mysteries*,
 ‘ not the Necessity or Usefulness of
 ‘ what is incomprehensible. And
 therefore if there be Things in this
 material World which we cannot
 comprehend, we may truly affirm,
 That there's a *Mystery* in *Nature*, or
 that *Natural Causes* or *Effects* are thus
 for

far above Reason, or *mysterious*; much more may we affirm it of Matters of Revelation: And therefore, to use the Instance of a vain insulting Adversary, *Tho' we live upon Water, and see and handle it daily, there may and is something in it mysterious, and above Reason, inasmuch as we cannot form an Idea of every thing that truly belongs to it.* And yet no wise Man will be tempted to make such a practical Inference as this Reasoner hath suggested, that is, *resolve* never to enquire into its Nature, nor imploy it

*See Sect. in his House or Grounds *. But, in 3. N. 10. Matters of Revelation, we know how inadequate our Ideas are, 'as much 'as *Finite* differs from *Infinite*, *Negative* from *Positive*, and *Sence* from 'Spirit: Must they not then contain things above Reason, because 'they are only thus inadequate?

But further, As for the original Import of the word MYSTERY, I am not concern'd to trace it in the primitive Uses of it, it's sufficient if by Custom it hath obtain'd another Import (it may be) every jot as proper as the former. Our Author owns, that

that in approved Claſſicks it's commonly taken for obſcure and intricate Matters, ſuch as cannot well be comprehended or ſeen into *. And * See N. this, I think, is equally proper with 5. Sect. 3. that other deſcrib'd by him, which implies ſomething beyond a Veil, not diſcernable till that is remov'd: And in this ſence the Types under the *Mofaick* Law he accounts *Myſteries*; for thoſe which thro' the Imperfections or Weakneſs of Reaſon, or the Immenſity, Diſtance, or Intricacy of the Object, may be as little diſcern'd as thoſe that have a Veil over 'em; and then they ſeem to be equally *myſterious*, and *above Reaſon*. In a word, *Mystery* is ſomething ſhut up from our View or Cognizance, and it is not material whether this be done by a Veil or other Impediments or Obſtructions; and conſequently *Mystery* and an *Inadequate Idea* may be very conſiſtent; I do not mean, that which ariſes from affected Ignorance, but the Intricacy of the Object, and the Weakneſs of Humane Reaſon under its higheſt Improvements.

But, to clear up his Understanding in this matter, by a few Arguments drawn from his own Positions, the Riches of his own inexhausted Brain, he tells us, *Cap. 3. N. 27.* That *certain Gospel-Doctrines are call'd Mysteries, with respect to the Jews, [not, that they knew nothing of 'em, but they were not clearly and fully reveal'd till the New Testament-times, being veil'd before by various Typical Representations, &c.]* Well, you see he allows *Mosaick Types* to be *Mysteries*, and gives the reason, Because they saw 'em thro a Veil; or, in *St. Paul's* Language, with respect to further Discoveries, *thro a Glass darkly*: And what is this, but that they knew them in part, or by inadequate Ideas? I'm sure our Knowledge is as much cramp'd in several of those Instances produc'd by our Author, from the Intricacy and Immensity of the Things 'emselfes, as those *Gospel-truths* shut up from the *Jews* by the *Mosaick Veil* of Types and Figures: 'And consequently, why is not the one as much 'a *Mystery* to us, as the other to the 'Jews, and for this very reason, be-
cause

'cause we know them inadequately.

But, to go a little further with him, I remember, in the State of his Question, as well as in other places, he gives us to understand, That *all Reveal'd Matters may be judg'd of even by common Notions, both as to their Manner and Existence, as easily as the ordinary Phænomena of Nature* ; and therefore concludes, That *there's nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, or above it* ; and, That *no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a MYSTERY*. This is the State of the Question ; and what he asserts must be a Criterion, in judging what is *mysterious* or *above Reason* : So that we may hence conclude, and that upon his *own* Principles too, That that *Thing* whose Manner or Existence cannot be conceiv'd, even with as much ease and clearness as the ordinary *Phænomena* of Nature, is a *Mystery*, and *above Reason*. Certainly here is a fair Concession, and such as will make things *mysterious*, because we can but form inadequate Ideas ; for, as this Author confesses, we can form Ideas of the Beings of Things, and know as much

as is useful from their Properties and Effects, whilst we are ignorant of the manner of their Existence or Production : See *N. 8, 11*. — (the one of Plants, and the other of Rain). Here he manifestly fixes our inadequate Ideas upon the *Modus* of Things, with respect to their Operations and Existence ; that is, our Ideas are inadequate, because we cannot decipher wherein their *Modus* consists, tho' we know their principal Properties by their Effects and Uses.

And now we may call in his own Principles to conclude against him, and affirm, That inadequate Ideas must necessarily imply a *Mystery*, for inadequate Ideas imply our Ignorance as to the *Modus* of Things, and that thing whose *Modus* cannot be comprehended, according to his own Principles, is *mysterious*, and *above Reason*. Here, I think, he pretends to *Out-do* the most improv'd Arts of *Priestcraft*, whilst he declares for nothing but *Reason*, and banishes *Mystery* out of the World, and yet imposes things that surpass the highest *Mystery* ; since he labours to make the
World

World embrace his *Contradictions* for the undoubted *Decrees of Reason*: [*This is, in his own language, trifling with a witness, or pitiful shifting or fooling, or what not, and such as discovers a mighty Scarcity of good Arguments, N. 13.*] But he hath not done with us yet, and therefore concludes with an obliging Proposal, [*If they will still be fooling, and call these things Mysteries, I'm willing to admit as many as they please in Religion, if they will allow me likewise to make mine as intelligible to others as these are to me, Ib.*]

I hope I have made good the first part, *That there are true and proper Mysteries, even in the Schools of Nature.* And, if so, it's manifest, notwithstanding his vain Triumphs; we have an Argument *à majori*, That there are *Mysteries in Revelation*: I say, it's a *majori* to every one but him, that has the Face to assert, That an *infinite incomprehensible Spirit is an Object equally intelligible with Objects of Sense, or with Wood or Stone.* As for the last part of his Proposals, I believe every one will consent, 'That he shall make all those reveal'd

Certain Christian Doctrines,

‘*Truths* we call *Mysteries*, as intelligible as he’s able, provided he’ll promise not to reject ’em, because he fails in his Undertaking; or, in a word, because he cannot make them compare with common Ideas or Notions.

And now, I hope, I have said enough to invalidate all the Arguments of this Chapter. But lest he should think me rude, or that I neglect him too much, I shall make some short Returns to a few Passages that are yet behind. And,

1st, He instructs us what it is to comprehend a Thing, *viz.* [*When its chief Properties, and their several Uses, are known to us; for to comprehend, in all correct Authors, is nothing else but to know; and as of what is not knowable we can have no Idea, so is it nothing to us.* I shall, for once, admit, that in the common Notion of Humane Perception or Comprehension, we think we know or comprehend a Thing sufficiently, when its chief Properties, and their several Uses, are known to us; but may we not at the same time discern, that
there

there are others we cannot conceive, and that the *Modus* or precise Nature of those we know are inconceivable: And so we may, without Offence, or in a strict and proper way of Speech, affirm, That there's a great deal *mysterious* in the thing, and *above Reason*; and yet we do not pronounce it *above Reason*, (as he suggests, *ib.*) because we know no more than concerns us; but because there's something inconceivable, tho' to conceive it does not so directly concern us.

But, *2dly*, as for that which is *mysterious* even in Matters of Revelation, we do not pretend that it is any thing to us; I mean, as if we were oblig'd to comprehend or define the precise *Modus* of the thing; *This is to be a Mystery and no Mystery*. However, since we discern in certain *reveal'd Truths* something which we cannot comprehend, we may believe those *reveal'd Truths* to be so far *mysterious*, 'and they so far concern us, as to pay 'the Obedience of Faith to 'em, and 'not reject the Whole, because we 'cannot comprehend Every-thing 'that belongs to 'em. This ought

to be an Eternal Rule to our Author in matters of Revelation, because it's founded upon his own Words and Principles: We believe the Divinity of our Saviour, because we have not only its Uses set forth, but we have it represented in the principal Properties of the Godhead, even such as are ascrib'd to GOD the Father; and consequently, in the Sence of this Author, we may be said to comprehend or know this Divine Truth. Therefore if any thing arises as to the *Modus* of its Existence, or otherwise, that is *mysterious*, (not knowable, or of which we can have no Idea) his own Rule directs him, that this is nothing to him, and consequently is by no means to be an Argument against this Divine Truth: I'm sure, if 'tis not ridiculous not to supersede our Disquisitions in matters that do not directly concern us, (another *Affertion* of his, *ib.*) *it's undoubtedly ridiculous to make Disquisitions in such Cases, and make them an Argument for rejecting the clearest reveal'd Truths*; which is the constant Practice of the *Modern Reasoners* or *Disputers* of this World, the *Socinians*. But;

But, to proceed, the next thing remarkable is, a compendious Rule to acquire Uſeful Knowledge, *N. II. viz. Not to trouble ourſelves nor others with what is Uſeleſs were it known, or what is impoſſible to be known at all.* Whereas in the Paragraph immediately preceeding, he ſeems to charge us with ſaying, *That Things are above Reaſon, becauſe we know no more than concerns us, or is uſeful.* And yet allowing this Notion, he tells us, that *it is ridiculous to ſuperſede our Diſquiſitions about it upon that Score*; that is, according to his own Notion, tho' we know as much of it as concerns us, or is uſeful. A bleſs'd Law-giver truly, to institute Contradictions almoſt with the ſame Breath; for, I think, he cannot avoid the Charge, without flying to that which is as abominable in his very Thoughts as this reproachful to his Reaſon; I mean, by Pleading he intended a *Myſtery*.

And now, having given you enough of the Doctrinal part, he carries us to Application; but truly, I hope I have diſabled him ſo viſibly
in

in the former, as supersedes the Necessity of a formal Reply to the latter. I shall only recite the Application he has made, and rather refer than answer; [*1st, That no Christian Doctrine, no more than any ordinary piece of Nature, can be reputed a Mystery, because we have not an adequate or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to it.*] As for what may be attributed to inadequate Ideas, I have said enough in this Chapter; and tho' we may not say, 'That the want of an adequate Idea 'is the *formalis ratio* that constitutes 'a *Mystery*, yet our Inabilities in comprehending some things that are 'really lodg'd in it, or really belong to 'it, makes it a *Mystery*; and as is already prov'd with as good reason as those things he counts *mysterious*, viz. Intelligible Truths beyond the Veil.

2dly, [*What is reveal'd in Religion, as it is most useful and necessary, so it must and may be as easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, or the like.*] We certainly agree, That God hath only reveal'd as much as is necessary or useful;

ful ; and, in matters of pure Revelation, no more than will give us an Idea of the Thing, or what it is GOD proposes to our Belief ; and therefore make this an Argument, that there are Things that belong to it, of which we cannot form a distinct Idea, and, consequently, from hence give it the Denomination of being *Mysterious*.

Now, as for the *mysterious* part of any *reveal'd Truth*, we affirm, That it exceeds our Comprehension, otherwise the *Mystery* must cease : But, as it exceeds our Comprehension, so we say, it is not necessary to be comprehended ; much less do we allow, that it may be comprehended by common Ideas or Notions, or scann'd by these Ideas : So as that, in case it doth not correspond with 'em, we cannot call in question the Truth of what is reveal'd and comprehended.

No, here, in case Curiosity tempts us to dive into the mysterious part of any reveal'd Truth, and upon the closest Researches, we find ourselves unable to comprehend ; ' We are to
' adhere to the Substance of the
' Truth,

‘ Truth, where we cannot comprehend the Modus of it ; or, in other Terms, adore, where we cannot comprehend. But as to our comprehending by common Notions, or, as easily as we can comprehend, Wood, or Stone, or the like, I observe,

1st, This Gentleman makes all Objects of Humane Knowledge equally comprehensible. And,

2dly, That we may take our Measures for comprehending any one, by those Idea’s we have formed of others ; but I have elsewhere sufficiently discovered the Falseness of both these Assertions ; and there I shall not enlarge, but rest upon the Conclusiveness of what hath been offered.

3dly, *When we do as familiarly explain such Doctrines as what is known of Natural Things (which I pretend we*

** See N. can) we may then be as * properly said*
12: Sect. 3. *to comprehend the one as the other.*

This is a very bold Undertaking, and not to be believed ’till he gives us good Reason, and nothing less than Matter of Fact for Demonstration, espe-

eſpecially if he intends that part of thoſe Doctrines we juſtly call *myſterious*. But then, in uſing this Familiarity, ' We muſt engage him not ' to explain away the Subſtance of ' any Doctrine, nor to reject the Doctrine, if he fails in his Explication. And now we come to attack him in his Strong-hold, that is, his Appeal to the Voice of Scripture: * And ^{* See Cap. 3. Sect. 3.} truly Scripture is an unqueſtionable Tribunal for the Deciſion of all Controverſies in Matters of Revelation; and as to their preſent Controverſies, as far as Scripture can determine, every one may deſire to put the Caſe on this Iſſue, and Appeal to this Tribunal (as well as he) provided he is ſatisfied Scripture is on his ſide; and he may with greater ſatisfaction be reputed Orthodox with this on his ſide, than to paſs for Orthodox with the whole World, and have it againſt him. But then in caſe he either miſtakes the Sence of Scripture, or has recourſe to it, to make it come up to the State of his Caſe, and prove more than what can be inferr'd from it; it's very bold to ſay, that Scripture

pture has engaged him in this *Error*, if it be one: Here I'm sure Scripture will be no Protection to him, against a just *Charge of Error*, because he makes an Appeal to her, and retreats under her Wing for Shelter; when in reality he charges his own false Reasonings, or the Arguments of some particular Passions, not to say unjust Propositions, on Scripture, as if all were the unerring Counsels and Dictates of *Divine Truth*. And truly this Reasoner does little less, when he attempts to prove, that there are no *Mysteries in Christianity*, because he endeavours to shew, that the word *Mystery* in the *New Testament*, is no where applied to the *Thing* we contend for, viz. a *Thing* that with respect to *Hamane Reason*, contains something in it altogether *incomprehensible*: For is it not absurd to argue against a *Thing* from the signification of a Word, which might never have been used in Scripture, and yet the *Thing* found there? and tho' it is used, yet our Author, pursuant to the *Mind of Scripture*, fixes Three several *Significations* on it, and

and consequently it can be no Argument that it hath not a Fourth ; because it does not appear in Scripture ; unless he could prove that the *Holy Ghost* thought it necessary to reveal all the Notions or Acceptations of the word *Mystery* ; therefore if this Advocate for Reason allows the whole Case, as he pretends, to be put upon this Issue, it will presently be given against him, for want of a good Consequence. So that in truth, if the Controversie is to be determined by Scripture, (as no doubt it ought) it must unavoidably turn upon this issue, ' Whether there are not Truths ' set forth in Scripture, in which, if ' we enquire into the Nature of 'em, ' a great deal is contain'd in 'em, ' which we cannot comprehend, and ' consequently are *mysterious*, and ' above Reason ; whether Scripture ' deliver 'em under these Denominations or no.

This may be true, tho' the Word *Mystery* were no where to be found in Scripture, or tho' Scripture had not so much as hinted, that there were any thing *mysterious* or incompre-

prehensible. If this can be proved, our Adversary must acknowledge, that there are Mysteries in Christianity still. The Instances of our Saviour's Incarnation already produced, move upon this Supposition; and I shall be ready to prove it, whenever he shall think fit to impugn the Truth of it. But besides this, I shall in some measure condescend to his own Method, and tho' I shall not Examine every Passage of Scripture, to see whether he has rightly stated the Signification of the Word, yet I do not question, but we may offer as strong Arguments to apply it sometimes to the Sense we contend for, as he hath done for another; and besides this, I hope to produce some Passages of Scripture, that assure us there are still those things in Christianity, we properly call *Mysteries*; and if this be performed, I hope it may without Affectation be said, that his Appeal to the Tribunal of Scripture is defeated.

And, 1st, because I do not design Opposition, or Disputes, for Opposition's sake; I shall own that the
Word

Word MYSTERY is used in the several Sences he hath put upon it.

I. For the Gospel in general.

II. For some unfolded Secrets.

And,

III. For things veil'd by Parables : but this is by no means an Argument that there is no other signification to be found in Scripture : for I am perswaded, I can prove the contrary with as much Authority and Force of Reason as he can produce against it ; I mean, that it's sometimes used to express the Incomprehensibleness of certain Truths, tho' reveal'd. And,

1. That *Mystery* must imply something that is in the Nature of it to us incomprehensible, St. Paul seems to have assured us, *But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 7. All sides agree, that the Apostle points at the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith, and particularly the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ, and more primarily the most abstruse part of it, his Incarnation.

2. It's visible the Apostle speaks of it as a *Mystery*, even when he re-

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veals

veals it ; for he reveals the Wisdom of God in a *Mystery*. He now speaks to the Perfect, that had own'd the Gospel, and the Divine Authority of his Preaching, as appears from the preceding Verse ; and it's their peculiar to have the Meat of the Word, or the *Mysteries* of the Kingdom of GOD, communicated to 'em ; and therefore, tho' this Wisdom of GOD be a *Mystery*, and consequently he delivers it as such, yet the Perfect believe, when they cannot comprehend, because it is the Wisdom of GOD : I am sure this Notion is agreeable to the Judgment of *Clemens Alexandrinus* ; for he uses the very Word of the Apostle, and calls it, *Τὴν ἐν μυστηίῳ λαλῶμένην σοφίαν, ἣν ἐδίδασξαν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ* ; nay, he makes this an Argument, why the Fundamental Truths of the Gospel should only be communicated to the Pure and Perfect, *ἐπεὶ ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἔν τῇ ἐν μυστηίῳ, &c. ut supra, Strom. Lib. 1.* And therefore since the Apostle reveals it in a *Mystery*, it must be so, because it contains something in it that is incomprehensible. Hence we may justly Vindicate our
Englisch

Engliſh Translation, which does not joyn, τὴν ἀποκαλυφθεὶσαν τὸ ἐν μυστηρίῳ, as our *Adverſary* would have it; but makes it a Repetition, or Enlargement upon the *Divine Wiſdom*, viz, even the *Hidden Wiſdom*. It's true, our *Adverſary* endeavours to evade this Expoſition, becauſe we are told in the 10th Verſe, *But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit*: But the Words manifeſtly referr to thoſe Things, which, in the preceding Verſe, God is ſaid to have prepared for them that love him, which are chiefly the Benefits of our Redemption, and the Conſequent of this fundamental Revelation; or at leaſt, if it muſt be this fundamental Inſtance of Divine Wiſdom, it is only reveal'd ſo as to let us know, what God intends by it, and aſſures us of the Truth of it, but not to comprehend the whole Nature of it; or in a word, it is ſo reveal'd, as any other thing is reveal'd in a *Myſtery*; that is, when ſomething remains in it, that is not to be comprehended; ſo that, in Truth, here's *Myſtery* in two Sences:

1st, With respect to the Incomprehensibleness of the Thing. And,
2dly, With respect to the Thing before it was communicated to us.

And thus far not only the Natural Construction of the Words, but the Authority of a Learned Expositor carries us, *Vid. Theophilaët. in locum*,
 μυστήριον καλεῖ, τὸ κατὰ τὴν Χεῖρὸν κήρυγμα, εἰ γὰρ
 καὶ κήρυγμα ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μυστήριον ἐστίν, καὶ οὐκ ἐστὶ
 ἄγγελοι ἤδεσαν αὐτὸ πρὶν γενέσθαι, καὶ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλο
 βλήποντες, ἄλλο νοούμεν.

But Secondly, I shall insist on that noble Passage of St. Paul to Timothy, *Ep. 1. Cap. 3. Ver. 10.* ‘And without
 ‘Controversie, great is the Mystery
 ‘of Godliness; God was manifested
 ‘in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit,
 ‘seen of Angels, preached unto the
 ‘Gentiles, believed on in the World,
 ‘received up into Glory. It’s observable, our Adversary expounds as accurately, as he reasons; for he produces this for his eighth Passage, where *Mystery* is put for the Gospel in general, whereas it’s manifest the Words cannot, without the greatest Violence, be applyed to any thing but a *Divine Person*, represented under

der certain Divine Characters, and indeed to none but our Saviour, the Corner-Stone of the Gospel, but not the Gospel; for truly the Apostle seems, in this place, to have given a description of his whole Mediation. I am sure the Current of the Fathers, as well as of after Commentators, apply it to none but our Saviour. But now since our Saviour's Incarnation is this *Mystery* of Godliness, it's evident the Apostle does not speak of *what it was before it was reveal'd*, but *what it is after it is preach'd and believed on in the World*, and therefore he calls it a *Mystery*, not because it was so before it was reveal'd, but because it still remains so; and thereupon he endeavours to represent it as such, by enlarging upon the Nature and Incomprehensibleness of it: God was manifest in Flesh, the Foundation of this *Mystery*, the following Characters being only their Appendages that take their rise and center in it. This is an Exposition that discovers itself so clearly, that we find our Adversary industriously huddling up this

Passage, as it were, in a *Mystery*, without giving any tolerable account of it; and at last is forced to confess, That the gracious Manifestation of Christ and his Gospel, is to us wonderfully stupendous and surprizing, N. 30. So that we plainly read *Mystery* in the very Sence we contend for: I am sure we have the Opinion of some Ancient Church-Writers to ratifie it. Of this Opinion we find *Athanasius* in his Tract against *Paulus Samosatenus de Incarnatione Verbi*, where he gives his Judgment, è *Cathedra*, as Archbishop of *Alexandria*; for first he lays open the Attempts of this Heretick, in endeavouring to Subvert the Doctrine of our Saviour's Incarnation, and stiles it, Μέγα μυστήριον [τὸ μέγα μυστήριον ἀνατρέπειν;] and to prove it such, cites this very place of our Apostle. Secondly, He represents the danger in attempting to unfold such profound Difficulties, that are only with safety to us believed, and in a word, enjoyns us to adhere to the *Apostolick Faith*, without admitting new *Terms* or *Notions*, Τὴν παραδοθεῖσάν πίστιν φυλάττειν, ἐκτρέπει δὲ πρὸς λεβήλους καινοτομίας, and above all,

εὐδοκᾶσαι τὴν περὶ τῶν τελικῶν μυστηρίων ζήτησιν,
 to dread the Disquisition of such a
Mystery. But besides the Opinion
 of this great Man, we have the
 Comment of *Isidore the Pelusiote*,
 and *Theophylact*, fixing the *Mystery*
 of Godliness in the *Incomprehensibility*
 of it. Thus the former, *Lib. 2. Ep. 192.*
 ὥς ἀγνοούμενον παντὶ πασιν, ἀλλὰ ὡς ἰδεῖν ἀδύνατον,
 and pursuant to this, expostulates,
 Who can comprehend the Miracle
 of his Conception, transacted with-
 out Coition, or imagine how the
 Divine Nature can be circumscrib'd,
 that is Immense, and not to be
 circumscrib'd? And *Theophylact*
 proceeds in the same Strain thus,
 Ἀλλῶς τε τὸ μὲν ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἐσαρκώθη πάντες ἴσασιν,
 τὸ δὲ πῶς ἀποκέκρυπται διὰ τῶν μυστηρίων ἔστιν,
in Locum. And now this is some-
 thing more certainly than calling it
 a *Mystery*, with respect to the Ages
 preceding the Gospel; for I think
 this Passage in itself admits of the
 Exposition before us more naturally,
 than that our Adversary contends
 for; besides we have the Authority
 of the Learned in past Ages.

since I have made it appear he has no advantage over us in his whole Hypothesis, I know not why we may not in his own Language pronounce against him, that *Mystery* in the New Testament, is sometimes put for a thing inconceivable in itself, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Notions, however reveal'd. This likewise calls to mind the Triumphs of our Adversary upon a Passage, which as we allow, styles the Gospel a *Mystery*, under this Notion; it's *Rom. 16. 25.* — *But is now made manifest*, whereupon he Expostulates, In what sence could this Secret be made manifest, if it remain'd still Incomprehensible? A mighty Favour indeed, to bless the World with a parcel of Unintelligible Notions. I confess, I incline to the former sence, I mean a *Mystery*, with respect to the Ages preceding the Gospel, but can see no foundation for Absurdities, no more than for his vain Triumphs, if we take it in the Sence he pretends to explode; for this Reasoner, had he not been too much used to confound things together,

gether, might have learn'd, that the highest *Mystery* is not wholly unintelligible; and it may be properly said, to be manifested in as much as God has communicated by the Apostle's preaching what's useful and necessary, and as much as will inform us what God proposes to our Belief: 'Again it's *manifested*, and that too 'to our unspeakable Comfort, since 'the vast Designs of Divine Love, 'and the unexpressible Benefits to 'us-ward in it, are abundantly laid 'open; and I think these are Favours or Blessings too rich to be exposed in Ridicule or Burlesque.

But further, If the use of the Word in Scripture will not prove the thing we contend for, there are sufficient hints in Scripture to prove it; I shall first insist on St. *Paul's* Accounting the preaching of Christ unto the *Greeks foolishness*; but unto them which are called, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.

Now this place is generally interpreted of the Incarnation of Christ, or the Union of the two Natures in
to

to one Divine Person: And those that embrace and believe it, must resolve it into the Infinite Power and Wisdom of God, not as a common, but special Act, and consequently a thing incomprehensible as they are; and on this account, it's to the *Greeks*, the great Masters of Reason, Foolishness; because, as it is represented to us, it contains in it, Things that can never be reconciled with common Notions, or Ideas. What common Ideas can satisfy us, that the Son of God should speak by a Man, or as the Sacred Canon hath it, in the form of a Man; that God should have a Son, and that he should suffer as the Son of God? What common Ideas can represent to us, that Christ could have a Being before the Worlds, as God; that he should be born a Man, and exist as such, and yet not as a Man, begotten of a Man? These things, the most improved Notices of Natural Reason cannot confirm, or warrant, no not our Adversary with all his Reason. If any thing, it's the *Arian*, or *Socinian* Hypothesis (tho' advanced contrary to

to the Current of Scripture) that may pretend most to be a Rationale in this matter. And yet our Adversary seems to explode this as much as that of the *Trinitarians*, because they are forced to allow Divine Worship to be paid him, [Cap. 1. Sect. 2. N.2. *I am mistaken if either they, or the Arians can make their Notions of a dignified, and Creature-God, capable of Divine Worship, appear more reasonable, than the Extravagancies of other Sects, touching the Article of the Trinity.*] But to return, It's manifest here we learn how the Doctrines of Christianity came to be branded with the Imputation of Foolishness, viz. *Because they will not comport with common Notices, or the received Principles of Natural Philosophy* ; for I have evinced it, upon the Objection of *Trypho* against *Justin*, and *St. Clement's* Comment on the place, Ἰδὲ λέγειν σὲ προὔπερχειν Θεὸν ὄντα πρὸ αἰώνων τούτων ἢ χεῖρόν εἶπα καὶ γεννηθῆναι, ἀνθρώπου γενομένου, ὑπομείνει, καὶ ὅτι ἐκ ἀνθρώπου ἕξ ἀνθρώπου, ἢ μόνον παρὰ δόξαν δοκεῖ μοι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ μωρόν. *Dial. cum Trypho*, p. 269.

And

Certain Christian Doctrines,

And St. Clement, *in locum*, thus,
Lib. I. Stromat. "ΕΛΛΗΝΙ ΔΕ ΜΩΕΙΑΝ ΜΥΘΩ-
 ΔΕΣ ΗΓΧΕΝΤΑΙ ΟΙ ΔΟΚΕΣΙΣΤΟΙ ΔΙΑ ΤΕ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ ΥΠΟΝ
 ΘΕΩΝ ΛΑΛΕΪΝ, ΥΠΟ ΤΕ ΕΧΕΙΝ ΤΟ ΘΕΩΝ, ΚΥ ΔΕ ΚΥ ΠΕΠΟΝ-
 ΘΗΝΑΙ ΤΑΥΤΟΝ. Here we see this great
 Man does not charge the *Greeks* with
 false Principles of Philosophy, as the
 Ground of their Error, for he re-
 presents the Thing as much inconsis-
 tent with such *principles* as they could,
 and makes this the Foundation of
 their unjust Charge, I mean in pro-
 nouncing the Doctrines of Christia-
 nity Foolishness; and indeed he calls
 'em *δοκασίστοι*, but it can be on no o-
 ther account, than because they
 would admit of nothing but *Natural
 Reason*, and *Philosophy*, and there-
 upon would try all revealed Truths
 by common Notions, or Principles of
 Philosophy, and reject 'em as absurd
 and foolish, because they could not
 make these deep Things of God to
 comport with common Ideas of Ob-
 jects of Sense. Indeed *Celsus* ob-
 jects much the same things against
Origen; for upon every turn, he en-
 deavours to ridicule the *Divinity of
 our Saviour*, by representing it inconsis-
 tent

ſiſtent with the Principles of *Natural Reaſon* : And now give me leave to make one ſingle Remark, ſince it occurs ſo naturally : Are not theſe the very Principles which our Advocate for *Reaſon* moves upon ? So that an unprejudiced Perſon might ſuſpect that I'm dealing with a *Celfus*, or a *Trypho* ; or that they were riſen from the Dead. But to conclude this Argument, it's manifeſt St. *Clemens* muſt believe, That the Fundamental Doctrines of the *Chriſtian Religion*, ſtill contains in it ſomething that cannot be comprehended by *Natural Reaſon*, that cannot be reconciled to common Ideas, or Principles of Natural Philoſophy, and conſequently ſomething that's *Myſterious and above Reaſon* : And therefore if this Reverend Father is not miſtaken in the purport of the *Holy Ghoſt* (as we have good Reaſon to conclude, he is not) the *New Teſtament* does contain the Thing (if not the Word) we contend for, I mean, propoſes to our Belief, Things that are Incomprehenſible, or above the Comprehension of Human Reaſon.

The

The last Argument I shall produce, is two or three Passages of Scripture, which (because they bear an Affinity to one another) I shall examine and conclude them under one Argument.

I begin with St. Paul's account of Humane Knowledge, even under this last State of Revelation ; for he includes himself, and the whole College of *Apostles*, who undoubtedly enjoyed the *Special Assistance of the Spirit of God* ; nay, St. Paul had been *caught up into the Third Heaven*, where he was almost *overwhelm'd with abundance of Revelations*, 2 Cor. 12. And yet he tells us, *We know but in part, and we Propheſie in part*, 1 Cor. Cap. 13. ver. 9. and the Reason assigned is, *We ſee through a Glaſs darkly*, ver. 12. ſo that the Impediment ſeems to lie upon the Mind, or the Immenſeneſs of the Object, not in God that denies us a competent Revelation ; for this is the laſt Revelation of himſelf ; and therefore this Glaſs argues an Imperfection, or Inability in comprehending ſome of thoſe Truths that are revealed ; but
if

if this Glass be a Veil which God casts before our Eyes, like that upon the *Jews*, in as much as he does not impart in this Life a clear Discovery of certain *Gospel-Truths*, then, according to the Mind of our Author, there are still *Mysteries* in the Gospel, in the highest Sence ; but truly St. *Clemens* fixes it upon the Imperfections of Humane Knowledge, since he represents the Mind in this Earthly Tabernacle, as viewing Things through Sences after a gross corporeal manner, whereas in another World our Knowledge will be highly enlarged, for then it will be Face to Face ; or, as he expresses it, *κατὰ μόναν ἐκείναν τὰς ἀκραιφνεῖς, καὶ ἀσωμάτους τῆς διανοίας ὁπβολάς*: That is, by a pure and naked Application of the Mind, or Intuition.

Again, it's manifest the Object of this Imperfect Knowledge, is the deep things of God, or, in plain terms, the fundamental Revelations of the Gospel ; for, the Apostle must at least comprehend, if not principally intend them, when he tells us, *And we Prophesie but in part* ; that is, those *Truths*
we

we publish to the World are only reveal'd in part, since we can only pretend to know or comprehend them in part. And truly *St. Clement* asserts as much of *St. Paul* himself, notwithstanding his abundance of Revelations, for thus, on his words *2 Cor. xii. 4.* (where, no doubt, he receiv'd the chiefest Instructions of his Apostolick Office) *He was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for Man to utter*; he observes, that there was no Law nor Precept given that obliged him to stifle any of those Christian Truths God had committed to him; so that in saying, *it is not lawful*, he intended to represent the Ineffability of the Divine Nature, or the things of GOD; Τὸ Ἀρρητόν τῆς Θεῆς ἀνιέμεν, or, δύναται εἰς ἀγία ἀφθεγγέσθαι τὸ Θεῖον μυστήριον. And, to confirm this Notion, he cites three Passages that represent the Incomprehensibleness of the Divine Nature, *Rom. xi. 33.* *Oh! the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God!* And again, *But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery: [That is, even when we speak*

Speak it, else it proves nothing in this place,] 1 Cor. ii. 7. And lastly, *Colos. ii. Ver. 23.* To the Acknowledgment of the *Mystery of God in Christ*, [*as you have it in the Ancient Readings*] in whom are hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom, or Knowledge. This is a very remarkable Passage, and therefore I must beg leave to enlarge upon it.

As for the Sence of St. *Clement*, it's visible he looks upon it to be a *Mystery*, tho' reveal'd and acknowledged, and to be a *Mystery* because it contains something in it which is Ἀπόκρυφον ἀποκρυφον, or ἀποκρυφον, for otherwise it can be no Argument to prove what he had just before asserted. Indeed, our Adversary thinks he has evaded the Force of this Exposition, by telling us, (without any tolerable Proof) That *the Words are to be understood of the Gospel of CHRIST*; but if it be the Gospel of CHRIST, it may be stiled a MYSTERY, in respect of its Fundamental Truths, inasmuch as they contain in 'em something that's hidden or mysterious; for thus much the following Verse apparently hints,

ἐν ᾧ, [i. e. in which, if this Exposition obtains] *are hidden* ἀποκρυφτοί: It's manifest the Apostle speaks of it as *reveal'd*, nay, as it is when acknowledged and embrac'd, and yet there is something *hidden* or *mysterious*. Thus we may conclude, against our Reasoner, that *Mystery* may be put for the *Gospel*, and yet call'd so, because it contains certain Truths, whose Nature cannot be fully comprehended, or certain Truths, that contain something in 'em that to us is incomprehensible. But yet, for all his majestic decisive way of expounding Scripture, I think the words more naturally point at the *Mystery* of our Redemption, in the Incarnation of the Son of GOD, especially if we add hereto the ancient Reading used by these Fathers, St. *Austin*, and St. *Ambrose*, to the Acknowledgment of the *Mystery* [not Knowledge of *Mystery*, as this vain Disputer of this World would have it] of GOD in CHRIST, for, 1st, ἐν ᾧ, which immediately follows, must more naturally be apply'd to *Christ*, not to *Mystery*, agreeable to our Translation, *In whom all*
the

the Treasures, &c. This is agreeable to the Sentiments of *Origen*, ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν — ἡτοι οἱ θησαυροὶ ἐν χερσὶ ἔσιν, In *Hierom.* Hom. 8. pag. 99. 2dly, If the Gospel of *Christ*, and not *Christ* himself, was intended, it would be improper to say, that the Treasures of Wisdom are hid in it, being a reveal'd Institution: Therefore we may justly conclude, pursuant to the Mind of *St. Clement*, That the Incarnation of our Redeemer (the Foundation of our *Redemption*, and Fountain whence all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge derive) is the *Mystery* of God in *Christ*, which is to be acknowledg'd, not unravel'd or fully comprehended; for, since it is expressly propos'd as a *Mystery*, and remains one when embrac'd or acknowledg'd, it must be so, because it carries in it something that is hidden or incomprehensible.

Indeed *Origen* manifestly joyns in this Notion; for, in his Comment on *Matt.* xiii. 44. he makes the *Field* to be the *Holy Scriptures*, that set forth all the Means of Salvation with the greatest clearness; but the *Trea-*

sure to be CHRIST, because in Him all the Depths of Wisdom are hid, in Him, in a *Mystery*, citing this very Passage of St. Paul, by way of Proof,

Τὰ ἀποκρυμμένα καὶ κρυπόμενα τοῖς θανέουσιν
[*differtis verbis*] νοήματα τῆς σοφίας ἐν μυστηρίῳ
ἀποκρυφθέντος καὶ τῷ Χριστῷ.

And now give me leave to make an Appeal, as he does, [to all Equitable Persons, N. 35.] Whether, by as good Reason and Authority, it does not appear, That not only the Sence of the Word, but the Things we contend for, are recorded in Scripture, as any he has produc'd to the contrary? So that, in truth, we are ready to [render up ourselves] to the Voice of Scripture, as well as submit the Merits of the Cause to it, without being influenc'd and carried away by such weak Practisings as he has set forth, in a Dialogue that would merit some Stripes, if perform'd by a School-boy, rather than Applause, as 'tis the Product of a pretending *Master of Reason*. See *Sect. 36*.

And now I have done with his Scripture-authorities, but cannot pass by one Remark of his, which I find

to

to be the chief Improvement that
graces his Second Edition: [*Nor is it
undeserving our particular Notice, that
Myſtery is here made the diſtinguiſh-
ing Mark of the False and Antichristi-
an Church ; (See Rev. xvii. 5.) And
no doubt but as far as any Church allows
of Myſteries, ſo far it is Antichriſtian,
and may, with a great deal of Juſtice,
tho' little Honour, claim Kindred with
the Scarlet Whore.*] Here is a very
bold Stricture, and yet a Man with
half an Eye may diſcern, that his
Obſervation is as irrational and ridi-
culous as his Inference ; for *Myſtery*,
in this place, I ſuppoſe, would not
have paſſ'd for a diſtinguiſhing
Mark, had not her Doctrines and
Practices merited the other part of
the Title, viz. *The Mother of Har-
lots, and Abomination of the Earth ;
had ſhe not held a golden Cup in her
Hand, full of Abominations and Filthi-
neſs of her Fornication, Ver. 4. and
been drunken with the Blood of the
Saints, and with the Blood of the Mar-
tyrs of Jeſus.* But as for his Inference,
had he conſulted St. Paul's Second
Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians* a little

better, he might have learn'd, that there's a *Mystery of Iniquity* as well as *Godliness*; but perhaps he was unwilling to be disappointed of a malicious, tho' illogical, Suggestion; he might there have inform'd himself, That it was always the Devil's Business to imitate the *True Religion* by mighty Signs and lying Wonders, if it were possible, to deceive the very Elect; nay, that *Antichrist* sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God, and consequently he must pretend to *Mystery* with a witness: So that, upon the whole, this Gentleman may as well assign the Devil's Miracles for a distinguishing Mark of Antichrist, and prove the true Religion to be nearly related to Antichrist, the Scarlet Whore, and the Devil, because she proceeds upon the Authority of Miracles: Nay, rather we may upon his Argument affirm, That Miracles are a distinguishing Mark of the true Religion: And since *Antichrist* and the *Devil* pretend to *Miracles*, the Religion they pretend to must be true too. Whereas we know *these* to be Divine
and

and Authoritative, *those* Diabolical and Usurped, so we pronounce *this* the *Mystery of Iniquity*, that the *Mystery of Godliness*.

The next thing that offers itself, is, the Suffrage of the Primitive Church. It's true, there are a great many things intervene, wherein he labours more to give us a Specimen of his Wit, than Reason: But truly, I think, they are both of a piece, for I can discover nothing that deserves a single Reflection, much less a formal Reply. I proceed therefore to the Suffrage of the Fathers, to whom he makes an Appeal. He tells us indeed, [*It is not out of any deference to their Judgments*, N. 40.] and therefore we must conclude he submits to it, because he's perswaded they peremptorily declare for his Opinion; but I hope to prove the contrary: For tho' he confesses he has bestow'd a great deal of Pains upon 'em, yet this is so far from discouraging us from entering the List, that I hope to make it appear, that his Pains are either an Effect of his Ignorance in these Authors, or of his Dishonesty

in suppressing their Opinions. And, first, all that he proves out of the Fathers is, That they have asserted other Notions of *Mystery* than what we contend for; whereas he himself assigns four or five different Notions; and if Classick Authors were consulted, we could produce some more: and therefore he might as well reject one of his own Notions, because the Fathers have not mention'd it. But I find this Author, upon every turn, shamefully betrays his Reason, for he knows not what is incumbent upon him to prove, and therefore we need not wonder if he proves not his main Design: I'm sure he's now to prove a Negative, (or that which amounts to it) if he proves any thing, *viz.* That the Fathers, he cites, nowhere apply the word MYSTERY to things beyond Humane Comprehension; or, that those Notions of the word *Mystery*, which he finds recorded, are deliver'd exclusively of all others; for, if he has neither cited all their Notions or Acceptations of the word, nor prov'd, that they are exclusive of all others, he proves nothing

thing againſt the acceptation of the word we now contend for ; and if ſo, the moſt curſory Reader will preſently pronounce, That he muſt give up the Cauſe, in caſe he fixes it on this Iſſue, I mean the Authority of Fathers. But becauſe I will take no advantage of his weakneſs, I will go along with him in his own Inſtances. And,

1^{ſt}, What he cites from *Clemens Alexand.* concludes nothing ; for, I know no Chriſtian that denies the Chriſtian Religion to be [*an Illumination, becauſe it brought hidden things to light, and that with reſpect to the Moſaick Veil.*] But this only proves one of his own Notions, that is indeed allow'd by us. But to be ſhort with him ; Whereas he has the Face to tell us, That *ſeveral of thoſe Texts of Scripture alledg'd by him, are by this Father expounded on his ſide, and conſequently againſt our Notion* : I ſhall appeal to what has been already cited from him, to prove the quite contrary *. Indeed I could add a great * See p. 46, 48.
deal more to diſcover his Judgment
of the Inconceivableneſs of certain

Ob-

Objects of Faith, or Matters of Revelation; and, because I'm engag'd, I shall produce a few Instances: And, first, where he styles Christianity an *Illumination*, he speaks of the *Fulness of Christ*, as a *Mystery* reveal'd indeed, but the Nature of it known to a very few; and he proves it from the Incomprehensible Nature of God, *Strom. lib. 5.* Ὁ ἰσθὶς πάντων φανερὸν, καὶ πάν νοῦμα, καὶ πάντων ἔννοιαν, ἣ ἂν ποτε γασθῇ παραδοθεῖν, ἀρρήτου ὧν δύναμις ὡπτε, and yet more fully on *Moses's* words, *Exod. 33. ver. 18. Shew me thy Glory;* Μη ἐν δίδακτον πρὸς ἀνθρώπων, μηδὲ ῥηδὸν τὸ Θεόν, ἀλλ' ἢ μόνῃ τῇ περ' αὐτῆ δύναμις γνωστῇ. 2. p. 365. *Strom. lib.* That is, by the *Effects of his Power*. Again, on *St. Paul's* words, *1 Cor. 5. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;* *Strom. lib. 5.* he observes, Ἀποθνῄσκεις Ἀχρῆθως θύμα υἱὸς Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀγαζόμενος. Here it's evident he argues from the Incomprehensibleness of the Divine Nature, and consequently must fix the *Mystery* on this Bottom, as well as the want of *Revelation*. Indeed, we may justly argue *à majori*, from the Sence of this Father, if the Nature

ture of the Godhead be, in the Opinion of this great Man, so highly incomprehensible, how much more must the Fundamental Article of the Christian Religion be so, that consists of the Union of the Divine with Human Nature, and consequently, in a proper sence, *mysterious*. See N. 42.

Thus much for St. *Clement*; the next Authority is *Justin Martyr*, which concludes nothing to his purpose: For, First, he only uses the Word in a loose Sence, and not exclusive of any other signification; and if this may be an Argument against that Sence which this Reasoner declaims against, it will be so against others, which he has expressly assigned. This may serve for a sufficient Return to the next Paragraph, where *Tertullian* styles all *Religious Rites*, or *Acts of Worship*, *Mysteries*; which among the Heathens were generally kept secret: yet, tho' this be an allowed Sence of the Word, it can be no Argument, but that *Mystery*, even in *Tertullian's* time, was apply'd to Things in 'emselves abstruse or incomprehensible. Of the
same


same stamp are his Arguments from *Origen*, which prove no more than what all sides own, *viz.* that *Mystery*, in a vulgar, or more loose Sence, is put for *Symbols*, *Types*, or any *abstruse* or *sacred Matter*. N. 44.

Certainly, had this *Gentleman* consulted any other *Pieces* of this *Learned Father*, he might have inform'd himself, that he uses *Mystery* even in *Divine Matters*, for Things that are to us incomprehensible. Thus, in the forecited Passage, speaking of the Thing as it now is, he expresses himself, Ἀποκρυμμένα νοήματα τῆς σοφίας ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἀποκρυμμένης καὶ τῷ Χριστῷ. [Ut Supra. See pag. 6.]

Again, on the Words of our Saviour, *Mat.* xix. 24, 26. he observes, 'That GOD was able to make a *Camel* pass thro' an *Eye of a Needle*; and yet no one but God or Christ, or he to whom he shall reveal it, is able to comprehend it, πῶς ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιῇσαι ὁ θεὸς δυνατὰ, αὐτοὺς ἂν εἶδέν, καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὃς μὲν ἀποκαλύψῃ ὁ ὢν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. Afterwards he challenges any Man to Illustrate or Explain such *Mysteries*; being Things only comprehended

hended, as well as performed, by

G O D, 'Εἰ δὲ ἐμφαίνει τὰ ὕλα καὶ παύσει τελικὰ πάντα μυστήρια, καὶ ἐπὶ τέλει ἡ γένεσις διὰ πνεύματος ὁδοῦν. θεῶν μὲν ὁ δυνατὸν, ἢ μή, ὁ δυνατός ἐξείταξις.
Pag. 382. 1 Vol.

But now  the cloſe of this Paragraph, he thinks he ſufficiently explodes our Notion of *Myſtery*, when he tells us *Origen* [*was far from thinking any Doctrine of our Religion a Myſtery, in the preſent Sence of the Word, that he expreſſly affirms them to agree all with common Notions, and to commend themſelves to the Aſſent of every well-diſpos'd Hearer.*] This truly looks very plausible; but I'm perſwaded, *Origen*, in making good this Aſſertion, will run counter to the Notions of this *Indefatigable Reaſoner*: For Firſt, It's well known, who the Holy Father was engaged with, a Learned Heathen, who had formed an Objection, That the Chriſtians were to believe Things, tho' in themſelves never ſo abſurd or ridiculous; and therefore it was his buſineſs to take off the Objection, by ſhadowing forth the Reaſonableneſs of every Doctrine: He begins with

same stamp are his Arguments from *Origen*, which prove no more than what all sides own, *viz.* that *Mystery*, in a vulgar, or more loose Sence, is put for *Symbols*, *Types*, or any *abstruse* or *sacred Matter*. N. 44.

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Again, on the Words of our Saviour, *Mat. xix. 24, 26.* he observes, 'That *GOD* was able to make a *Camel* pass thro' an *Eye of a Needle*; and yet no one but *God* or *Christ*, or he to whom he shall reveal it, is able to comprehend it, πᾶς ἀνὴρ νοήματα πεποιθεὶς ὁ θεὸς δύναται, αὐτὸς ἀνὴρ ὁδῶν, καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἡμῶν, καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀποκαλύψῃ ὁ θεὸς ἀντὶ αὐτοῦ.
Afterwards he challenges any Man to Illustrate or Explain such *Mysteries*; being Things only comprehended

with the Doctrines of Natural Religion, the Being of a God, and our Love towards him; but when he comes to the *Mystery* of our Saviour's Incarnation, he makes a stand, and repeats *Celsus's* Objection, viz. *ὅτι ἐκ θνητῆς σαρκὸς ὅληα θεῖν νομιζουσιν, καὶ ἐν τέτρωστον θεῶν δοκῶμεν.* The Answer is remarkable; for it evinces the Divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour, as a standing Doctrine of the Christian Church, to the Eternal Confusion of all *Socinian* Pretences to Antiquity. Let our *Accusers* know, that we (as it were speaking the Sence of the Christian Church) do not only think, but are fully persuaded, that he is Originally, or in the Beginning GOD, and the Son of GOD; nay, he is the Substantial Word, Wisdom, and Truth; and as for his Mortal Body, and Human Soul, we attribute the greatest Things to it; in as much as a most exact and compleat Union with his Divinity, it obtains a kind of Divinity; so that we may still treat our Blessed Saviour, GOD and Man, (as GOD) with the highest Acts of Divine Worship.

Worſhip. His words are theſe :

Ἰσχυεῖ οἱ ἐγκατῶντες ἵσα ὅν μὲν νομίζομεν καὶ πε-
πείσμεθα ἀεχθῆεν ἢ Θεόν, καὶ ἔν Θεῷ, ἕτ' ὁ
ἀντόλογος καὶ ἡ ἀποστολία, καὶ ἡ ἀπαλήθεια, τὸ δὲ
θνητὸν αὐτῷ σῶμα, καὶ τὴν αἰθεραπύην ἐν αὐτῷ
ψυχὴν τῇ πρὸς ἐκείνου μόνον κοιναίᾳ, διὰ ἐνδοξί-
αν ἀναγράφει, τὰ μέγιστα φέμεν περσευληθέντα, καὶ
τὴς ἐκείνου θεότητος κοινοποιήτα, εἰς ὃ ὅν μετ' α-
βελιχένο.

You ſee the great Deſign of the Apologiſt is to repreſent how ſuch Honour and Dignity is derived upon the Humanity of our Saviour, and conſequently the Reaſonableneſs of paying Divine Worſhip to him even as God-Man, or God Incarnate; and purſuant to this, to juſtifie thoſe Honours that accrew to the Body of our Saviour, he appeals to the Natural Tranſmutations of Matter, whereby Bodies are often highly refin'd and improv'd, and then ingeniouſly concludes, *Why ſhould not the Infinite Power of GOD therefore be able to change the Mortal Body of Jeſus?* εἰς αἰθέριον καὶ δέαν ποιότητα.

Thus we ſee how, out of Ignorance, or a worſe Principle, the Diſputer of this World (for the Title belongs to him, tho' not ſo deſervedly

ly as those on whom St. *Paul* bestows it) has Misrepresented the Sence of this great Man, whose main Design was, to shew the Reasonableness of paying Divine Worship to the Blessed Jesus; and this he sufficiently perform'd, by asserting his Divinity, but he did not attempt to demonstrate the *Modus* of the Union of the two Natures by common Notions. He has indeed expressly asserted our Saviour's Divinity, as well as Humanity, in the highest Notion of it; and I defie this profound Reasoner to state the Union of both Natures by common Ideas or Notions, much less to give us as familiar an Idea of it as we have of Wood or Stone. Till he has done this, he trifles, and we shall still believe that our Saviour's Incarnation is thus far a *Mystery*. Thus we have turn'd those very Fathers he most relies on against him; and tho' he has the Confidence to fix a peremptory Challenge upon the Writings of the three first Centuries, I could produce as much more, had I not a regard to my own Time, and that of the Reader's, which ought
to

to be a sufficient Consideration with every Man, to prevent him from engaging in Impertinences, or dwelling too long where Necessity does not require it: I shall therefore only beg Leave to add the Judgment of *Ireneus*, — *Si autem omnium quæ in Scripturis requirantur absolutiones non possumus invenire, — credere autem hæc talia debemus Deo, qui & nos fecit; rectissimè scientes, quia Scripturæ quidem perfectæ sunt, quippe à verbo Dei & Spiritu ejus dictæ: Nos autem secundum quod minores sumus & novissimi à verbo Dei & Spiritu ejus, scientiâ mysteriorum ejus indigemus; & non mirum est, si in spiritualibus cælestibus, & in his quæ habent Revelari hoc patimur nos, quandoquidem eorum quæ ante pedes sunt — quæ & conteruntur à nobis, & videntur & sunt nobiscum, multa fugerunt nostram scientiam, & Deo hac ipsa committimus; — Si ergo & in rebus creaturæ, quædam quidem eorum adjacent Deo, quædam autem & in nostram venerunt scientiam, quid mali est, si & eorum quæ in Scripturis requirantur, universis Scripturis spiritualibus existentibus, quædam quidem*

absolvamus secundum gratiam Dei; quædam autem commendamus Deo, & non solum in hoc sæculo, sed in futuro; ut semper quidem Deus doceat, homo autem semper discat, quæ sunt a Deo? [Here, by way of Confirmation, he cites St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. v. 13.] *Semper enim fides quæ est ad magistrum nostrum permanet firma, asseverans nobis, quoniam solus vere Deus, [and afterwards concludes] si secundum hunc modum quem diximus, quædam quidem questionum Deo commiserimus, & fidem nostram servabimus, & omnis Scriptura ideo nobis data, consonans nobis invenietur.* Lib. 2. Adv. Hær. cap. 47. Ed. Eras. I have cited this at large, because I find every thing agreeable to the Hypothesis I have hitherto advanc'd. As,

1st, *Mystery* is indisputably apply'd to *reveal'd Truths*, beyond the reach of Humane Comprehension.

2^{dly}, Such *reveal'd Truths* apparently deliver'd in Scripture, are not to be rejected; because we cannot resolve the Difficulties that seem to accompany the Belief of 'em, but to embrace 'em as the Word of GOD,
and

and conſequently as founded in infinite Wiſdom and Veracity.

3dly, Our Unſkilfulneſs, not to ſay Inabilities, in comprehending Objects of Sence, or Phyſical Matters, is made an Argument, that there are *Myſteries* in Matters of Revelation.

I have hitherto confin'd my ſelf to his Rule, *i. e.* the Fathers of the Three Firſt Centuries; but truly I can ſee no juſt reaſon why the Fathers of after-Ages may not be admitted into the preſent Controverſie, at leaſt as Witneſſes, if not Judges. I'm ſure there can nothing abſtract, but his groundleſs Fiction of a general Combination, to reſolve all *Religion* into *Mystery*: For, as for the received Uſe or Signification of the Word, certainly after-Ages may be as competent Judges as thoſe of the Firſt Century: And, as for the Controverſie itſelf, Whether there's any Doctrine in Chriſtianity *myſterious*, certainly that Age ought to be appeal'd to, that had a more ſpecial occaſion to bring the Controverſie upon the Stage, and this the *Arrian* Age, and thoſe that follow'd it; for,

in this Age it's well known, those Doctrines we contend, are *mysterious*, were more nicely controverted. I shall therefore add to those Passages already cited, a few more, which prove the Use of the word to be apply'd to things incomprehensible; and that there are Doctrines in Christianity pronounc'd *Mysteries*, and that too for the Incomprehensibleness of 'em. The first I shall instance in is *Dionys. Areop.* where in one place he describes our Saviour's Incarnation, *θεαρχὸν τῆς ἀφθέγλης θεοπλασίας μυστήριον*, *Cap. 4. de Cælest. Hierarch.* In another place, *ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ πάσης θεολογίας ἐκφανέσθαι, ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἰησοῦ θεοπλασία, καὶ Ἀρρήτις τότε λόγῳ παντὶ, καὶ ἀγνώστῳ νοῦ παντὶ, καὶ ὡπὼ τῷ πρωτίτῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀγγέλων, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀνδρικῶς ἐστρωθῆναι μυστικῶς παρελήφμεν*, *Sect. 9. Cap. 2. de Divinis Nomin.* The second Instance is from a Tract entitl'd, *Expositio Fidei*, rejected indeed as a Piece of *Justin Martyr*; yet from *Leontin's*, and other concluding Arguments, justly esteem'd to be the Product of the *Arrian* Age: He stiles the Unity and Trinity, *Ἀπόρρητον*, and confesses it cannot be

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unfolded by Words, γλῶσσι τε πάλιν σαρκὶ ῥυπῶντι, and upon the Incarnation of Chriſt, ὡς τὰν ἐγὼ ὑπῶντι ἐπαπορήσω, τότε τὸ μυστήριον χριſτιανῶν ἀναγέλω τὸ θαῦμα, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἔχομεν λόγον, ἀλλὰ καταλήψιν κήσης φουσεως : And in ſuch deep Reſearch, at laſt, concludes with this Rule : περιφρετοῖς ζητῶμένοις ἐτοιμὴν λύσιν τὴν πίσιν.

And now we may conclude this Chapter much in the ſame ſtrain that he does N. 45. I do not find but [*the Fathers of the three firſt Centuries have exactly the ſame Notions of Myſtery, as well as thoſe that follow them,*] and for an Allay to his Jealouſies, I think they are pretty conſiſtent as well as unanimous ; but then this Conſiſtency and Unanimity happens to be againſt a trifling Reaſoner, and therefore I muſt take the Reverse to his concluding Period, [*and juſtly hope, by this time, the Cauſe of Incomprehenſible and Inconceivable, or Myſteries in Religion, will be more zealouſly maintain'd by all that ſincerely reſpect Fathers, Scripture, or Reaſon.*]

I come now to the Fourth Chapt, Sect. 3. which is an Answer to ſome Scripture-Objections, and particular-

ly from the Nature of Faith. I now find this Discourse swells upon me beyond Expectations; and therefore, as for the Scripture-passages cited by him, tho' there is more in 'em than he has suggested, yet I shall pass 'em, especially because I think the Merits of the Cause does by no means turn upon 'em: I shall therefore take up his Friend's Arguments concerning the Nature of Faith, and try if he may not be compel'd by dint of Argument, since he would not embrace the Advice of his Friend, *N. 51.*

And first, As for what he has delivered, *N. 52, 53.* I find nothing but what has already received an Answer, [*particularly what is cited, Sect. 2. c. 2, & 7.*] or at least, but what amounts to no more than will be concluded by what I'm going to offer; and therefore he may take it for a full, or competent Answer, *viz. Reason* is a necessary Hand-maid, or Instrument of Faith; in-somuch, that we must believe upon Rational Motives and Convictions; And thus far, I know no Son of the Church of *England*, that will dissent from

from him. As for what is delivered, N. 54. *[That Faith consists of two parts, Knowledge and Assent.]* I think no one will be so absurd to deny it; for I'm perswaded there can be no Assent without Knowledge: Therefore, in a word, had I known his Design, I should have excused the labour of citing so many Texts to prove it, and in a few words grant, *That in those things we call the pure Credenda of Religion, we are at least to know so much, as will enable us to form an Imperfect Idea of what it is God proposes to our Belief; but it does not imply such a Knowledge, as enables to unravel and comprehend the whole Nature of the Object, or the very Modes of its Existence, or Properties; or much less, give a Rationale of every thing that belongs to it.* No, if we know as much as instructs us what it is God proposes to our Belief, we submit all the Difficulties that may arise from the Belief of it, to God's Power and Wisdom, and yield an Assent (notwithstanding some seeming Absurdities) upon the Infinite Veracity of God. This distinguisheth

Faith from a bare rational Assent in common Matters ; and all this is consistent with what he has delivered, *N.* 55, 56. and therefore I shall not ingage in a particular Examination of what is there offered. To proceed then in order to a clear Demonstration of this Notion of Faith, I shall not consider the Case of *Abraham's* Faith (being the next thing that offers it self) but shall instance in the Belief of the Creation : Thro' Faith we understand, that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God ; so that Things which are seen, were made of Things which do not appear, *Heb.* xi. v. 3. Here I think is a vast difference between God's creative Power, in raising the World out of nothing, and restoring a dead Person to Life again, before the corruptible part was any wise dissolved. Indeed I cannot conceive how we can form an Idea of the possibility of such a Production ; that God should raise so vast a stock of Matter, even all created Nature, and every thing that we can form any tolerable Ideas of, and yet without a-
ny

ny Materials to work upon, can never be comprehended. The *Platonist* ſuppoſed a Soul to the World, and the *Ariſtotelian* a firſt Mover, but could never give any tolerable account of the Riſe of Mundane Matter, without making it eternal. In ſhort, they always taught, That an Agent neceſſarily ſuppoſes a Patient really diſtinct from the Patient, eſpecially in external Actions: And we know in Numbers it's univerſally true, *Ex nihilo nihil eſt*. And we can conceive no otherwiſe in Nature, at leaſt the Reaſoner cannot on his Principles pretend to it; for he tells us, we can form no manner of Idea of nothing; and therefore how it is poſſible to form an Idea of the Creation by common Ideas, when all our Ideas take their riſe from Created Beings, even that of the Infinite and Eternal Being, are reſembled by Objects of his own production. It's true, we ſay this is an effect of Infinite Power, but we have no notion of the Thing, unleſs we apply Infinite Power to that which is the Subject of it, which is nothing into every

very thing ; and when all is done, we form an Idea of this Infinite Power, purely by the Effects of it in Finite Beings : So that upon the whole, it's evident, the Belief of the Creation, (that implys a Production of all things out of nothing) is an Object that exceeds Humane Comprehension ; and consequently we may conclude, that Faith (which yields an Assent to the Doctrine of the Creation) often implys an Assent to a Thing that contains something in it, that is Incomprehensible. And indeed, that Objects of Faith contain Things that exceed Humane Comprehension, is a Truth so indisputable, that Faith in the Judgment of the Primitive Church-Writers, was on this account distinguished from Knowledge or Science. ' It's true ; ' In all Objects of Faith, we are to ' know so much of 'em, as to direct ' us what it is God proposes to our ' Belief. And Secondly, We are to ' believe, That it is God that proposes 'em. Thirdly, In all Acts of ' Faith we are to yield an Assent to ' the Truth, or Being of Things ; and ' this

‘ this ſuppoſes, that we have formed
 ‘ at leaſt an imperfect Idea of their
 ‘ Nature ; but for the *Quomodo ſint*,
 ‘ that is, for the Manner of their Be-
 ‘ ing, or Exiſtence, that may be an
 ‘ act of Knowledge, or Science, but
 ‘ not of Faith ; ſo that if ſeeming
 ‘ Contradictions or Abſurdities ariſe
 ‘ on this account, and conſequently
 ‘ are thus far juſtly Incomprehenſi-
 ‘ ble, Faith throws us upon the Infi-
 ‘ nite Veracity of God. All this I
 ſhall endeavour to confirm by the
 Authorities of the Primitive Church.
 And,

First, The Paſſage already cited
 from *Irenæus* manifeſtly inſtructs us,
 That there are Difficulties and MY-
 STERIES in *Revealed Truths*, which
Humane Reaſon cannot comprehend,
 and obliges us to commit all ſuch
 Matters to GOD, becauſe they were
 delivered by his Word and Spirit ;
 and what is this, but to embrace and
 believe upon his Infinite Veracity ?
 And at laſt concludes, That if we
 obſerve the Method, *Fidem noſtram*
ſervabimus, & omnis Scriptura à Deo
nobis data, conſonans nobis invenietur :
 Does

Does not this imply, that there are things contained in Matters of Faith, that are Incomprehensible? Yea, rather that all seeming Difficulties, or Absurdities that arise from 'em, when scann'd by common Notions, or Ideas, are to be committed to God as the best Expedient to preserve a right *Faith*, see *Pag.* 64. But,

Secondly, Clemens Alexand. seems to state the Notion of *Faith* more clearly, in opposition to Science; And first he fixes the *Foundation of Faith* in the Word of GOD, or the *Holy Scriptures*, and represents it as an Irrefragible Foundation, that carries the highest Demonstration in it; and that we are to enquire no further than *Ipse dixit*, upon which he advances this Maxim, Ἀλήθεια γὰρ ὁ λέγων, ὁ δὲ ἀπισήσας, τὰ λέγοντι, ἠπίστανε τὰ Θεῶν. And to let us see how far he extends it, he instances in the fore-cited Passage to the *Heb. Cap. xii. v. 12.* and thence proceeds to state the Difference between *Science* and *Faith*, thus, ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὁπιστήμη ἐξ ἰσ ἀποδείκτικῇ, ἡ πίστις δὲ χάρις ἐξ ἀναποδείκτων, *Vid. Stro. Lib. 2, P. 362, 3, 4.* and in his 5th Book he's
more

more full, ὁ ἀπίστολος παρακαλεῖ ἵνα ἡ πίστις
ἡμεῶν μὴ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει Θεοῦ
τῇ μόνῃ, ἀντὶ τῆς ἀποδείξεως, διὰ ἡμεῶν τῆς πίστεως
σώζεν δυνάμεν. Here we see, *Faith* is

resolved into the Infinite Power and Veracity of GOD; insomuch, that we are obliged to believe, as soon as we know it to be the Word of GOD, or as soon as we know GOD proposes any thing to our Belief: Here we find Science and Faith opposed, the one requiring Demonstration or Arguments, drawn from the Nature of the Thing; the other, not so: Therefore we must conclude, That if GOD proposes any thing to our Belief, that contains Matters incomprehensible, or not reconcileable with common Notions; *Faith*, in the *Opinion* of this Father, will command an *Assent*; insomuch, that his Infinite Power and Veracity must over-ballance all seeming Absurdities and Contradictions.

But to conclude this Argument, I shall produce the Judgment of St. *Chrysostom*: Thus he assigns the Reason, why the Natural Man cannot receive the Things that be of GOD, 1 Cor. ii. v. 14. viz. For the
Im-

Immensities of the Things themselves, far exceeding the Comprehension of the most Improved Reason; and for the want of Faith, τέτρεσι ὅτι πίστευς δεῖται τὰ

λεγόμενα, καὶ λόγοις αὐτὰ καὶ λαβεῖν ἔκ ἐνι, ὑπερβαίνει γὰρ αὐτῶν τὸ μέγεθος ἐκ πολλῆς τῆς περιστάσεως τῆς ἡμετέρας διανοίας τὴν ἐνέλειαν, *Hom. 7.*

And upon the Article of the Creation, *Heb. xi. v. 3.* he tells us, The Mind that is prepared for the Reception of Faith, must be παντὶ ὑπερβαίνουσης

ἰσότητος καὶ τὴν αἰσθάνουσαν τῶν λογισμῶν τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρεργουμένης; she must be elevated

above Sense, and all sensible Objects; and pass over the Weakness of Hu-

mane Reasonings; and afterwards, Whereas, says he, Faith is vilified as

a Thing that is void of Demonstration, ἀναποδείκτον πρᾶγμα; or rather, a

Thing full of Folly, καὶ ἀπάτης μάλλον ὄν, the *Apostle* shews us in *this one Instance*,

ὅτι τὰ μέγιστα διὰ πίστεως καὶ ἔτι διὰ λογισμῶν καθορδύνει; for the very Article, says he,

is not established by Reason, but rather the contrary, ὁ μὲν γὰρ λογισμὸς ἐδὲν

ὑπερβάλλει τοῦτον, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀντίον. *Hom. 22.*

In *Epist. Heb.*

Again we find him describing Faith under the very same Notion,

Hom.

Hom. 23. in *Ter. Johan.* where, upon *Nichodemus's* Words, *How can a Man be born when he is old?* v. 4. he observes, τὸ γὰρ [πῶς τοῦτο] τῷ ἐ σφόδρα πεισύνων ἐστὶν ἐκ παπορήσις τῷ δὲ ἀπὸ γῆς ἐπ. Upon which he enlarges, and tells us, It is the Question of Hereticks upon the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour, (demanding, πῶς ἐσαρκώθη πῶς ἐγενήθη) that by the weakness of common Notions, or Reasonings, destroy his Immenſe Nature, καὶ τῇ τῷ δὲ κέων λογισμῶν ἀσθένεια, τὴν ἀπειρον ἐκείνην ἀποβάλλοντες ἐστὶν; and at last concludes, That such Practices, or Questions, τῆς πίσεως ἐκπεσεῖν αὐτῆς ὀρθῆς. And on the Second Part of the Question, about entering the Womb a Second time, he observes, When a Man proceeds upon common Notions, or Reasonings in Spiritual Matters, and does not receive the Dictates of Faith, καὶ μὴ δέχεται τὴν τῆς πίσεως συναλλάξιν. He talks like a Drunken or Madman, uttering the most absurd and ridiculous things.

And now, certainly, we may conclude, what *St. Chrysostom's* Notion of Faith was, without drawing Inferences

ferences ; and that it every way agrees with that of *Clemens Alexandrinus* : It's therefore manifest, Faith is distinguished from Knowledge, or Science, not only as the Objects of it are Matters of Revelation, but as they contain Things that are incomprehensible ; and yet it yields an Assent upon the Infinite Veracity of the Word of GOD : I'm sure this Great Man has dropt such unlucky Words against our *Adversary's* Principles, or his Methods of Examining Divine Truths, as if he were risen from the Dead, and were preparing to accuse him of Heresie, or some sly Maxims that look that way. I should therefore advise him to weigh the Opinion of so Great a Person, before he advances too far : and yet, when I consider what severe Censures he has past upon the Writers of this Age, I despair of Success in giving Advice in this kind ; for I cannot think he'll ever be perswaded to take his Measures of Faith, from an Age, or any Writer in it, when he makes 'em, as it were, to have entred into a League to turn all Religion into *Mystery*,
and

and this another to be Name for *Imposture*, or *Priestcraft*: If this be true, to be instructed by such a Race of Men, is, in plain *English*, to take up one's Faith from those that have fallen away from the Faith; but of this I shall say more in the last Chapter.

To return then: It's now abundantly evident, that the Notion of Faith which we now contend for, is not a Thing contrived to advance a particular Hypothesis, or serve a particular Design, but by no means such a one as he suggests, *viz.* [*To stop the Mouths of such as demand a Reason where none can be given, and to keep as many in Ignorance, as Interest shall think convenient.* See N. 48.] But I hope an Impartial Reader will find it establish'd upon a good Foundation, or in a word, upon such Reasons as he is not able to subvert or remove; beside, if it be a Contrivance, we have this Apology, that it is not a late Forgery, since we have traced it almost as far as any Ecclesiastical Records, (besides those of Scripture) admit of; and this is a considerable

Presumption of the Injustice of such foul-mouthed Aspersions, till he gives us a better Set of Arguments to remove it; which is the next Thing that should be examined: but truly there appears so little in 'em, that I think they scarce deserve a distinct Examination:

The First is, [*If Faith were not a Persuasion resulting from the previous Knowledge and Comprehension of the Thing believed, there could be no Degrees nor Differences of it.*] Now First, It's manifest, the Argument is advanced on a false Supposition, (and that which runs thro' all his Observations) *viz.* That we deny all Degrees of a previous Knowledge of the Object; whereas we say, there must be at least such a previous knowledge of the Object, as instructs us what it is GOD proposes to our Belief; but there's no necessity of Comprehending the Absolute Nature of the Thing, so as to be able to give a *Rationale* of every Thing that really belongs to it; and that too, by trying it by common Notions. And moreover, we say, the different Degrees
of

of Faith, do by no means riſe from ſuch a Comprehensive Knowledge: No, when once we know what GOD propoſes to our Belief, the Degrees of Faith ariſe from the Application of GOD's Veracity to our Minds and Conſciences; if the Mind is poſſeſſed with a deep Sence of it, as to engage us to place an abſolute Confidence in it, tho' we cannot form a *Rationale* of the Thing, yet we may embrace it with the higheſt Degrees of Faith: I'm ſure, this is the Doctrine which [*this Man of Reason*] might have learn'd from S. Paul, in the Caſe of *Abraham, Who againſt Hope, believed in Hope,---and being not weak in Faith, he conſidered not his own Body now dead, nor yet the Deadneſs of Sarah's Womb: he ſtaggered not at the Promise thro' Unbelief, but was ſtrong in Faith, giving Glory to GOD, and being fully perſwaded, that what he had promiſed he was alſo able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs; Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20, 21.*

2d Arg. [*The Subject of Faith muſt be intelligible to all, ſince the Be-*

lief thereof is commanded under no less a Penalty than Damnation.] As for the Intelligibleness of Objects of Faith, I have already stated how far that is necessary ; but, with Submission, I think the Sin and Damnation of Unbelief, arises, not because GOD has furnish'd us with a perfect *Rationale* of the Nature of every Object of Faith, and we reject it ; but because he hath furnish'd us with Means sufficient to know what he hath proposed to our Belief, and to know that he hath proposed them, and we will fully reject 'em ; and consequently what he proposes : but more especially, because he hath asserted the Truth of 'em, by the highest Demonstrations of the Spirit, in mighty Signs and Wonders : This was the Case of the *Jews* ; but now ye say, Ye see, therefore your Sin remaineth.

4th Arg. [*Except Faith signifies an Intelligible Persuasion, we cannot give others a Reason of the Hope that is in us.*] The Inference is apparently false ; for we certainly give a Reason (and that too, according to the Mind

Mind of St. Peter) of any Article of Faith, when we prove that it is Revealed by GOD, and that we yield an Assent to the Truth of it (tho' we cannot remove every Difficulty that may arise from it) upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity.

As for his *Third*, and *Fifth Observations*, I shall Appeal to any unprejudiced Reader, whether there's any thing in 'em, that deserves a particular Reply, more than in those Objections he first framed, and then answered: For as the former prove nothing against the Incomprehensibleness of Matters of Faith, so the latter were never advanced, to prove the Necessity of admitting such Objects of Faith. Upon the whole then, I think it appears, there are Matters of Faith that contain Things in 'em, which are Incomprehensible, and yet Faith yields an Assent upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity, and consequently it's an uncontrollable Argument, there are *Mysteries* in the *Christian Religion*.

The next thing to be considered, is, his Reply to the Argument of Mi-

acles, *Cap. 5. Sect. 3.* And, First, he entertains you with the Nature of a Miracle. And as for the Description he gives us, I find, in the Main, no Reason to except against it; after this, he guards it with some Limitations: The First of which is, That a Miracle is not to be admitted contrary to Reason; I suppose, he means contrary to common Notions, or those Idea's which Reason has formed from Sense, Experience, or Instruction. And, no doubt, this is a very just Limitation: 'For a Miracle is performed upon Objects of Sense; and 'tis an Address to our Senses, or a Demonstration accommodated to the outward Senses, by some sensible Effects, or Operations; and consequently, nothing is to be admitted as a Miracle, that contradicts the Testimony of the Senses; and we are, at least, so far Judges of its possibility, that in Case it manifestly contradicts the Testimony of our Sense, we may justly rank it among Impossibilities, and reject it as such. But further than this, I cannot discern, that we are com-

competent Judges of the Possibility of any Miracle; for to judge of its Possibility, supposes a knowledge of its *Modus*: But this our *Adversary* will not allow; [*For the manner of Miracles, (says he) is not explicable.* N. 77.

Thus far we are agreed; but I know not how this Limitation, much less those that follow, affect the present Controversie. Indeed, he at last comes to the Point, and tells us, [*Miracles are not above Reason, tho' we know nothing of the Modus.*] But I would fain know, why a Thing that contains somewhat in the Nature of it, which exceeds Human Comprehension, is not as properly *above Reason*, or *Mysterious*, as a Thing (in itself intelligible) only it lies dormant, because shadowed thro' a Veil. I'm sure, *Origen* tells the contrary, *Comment. in Mat.* 19. 24, 26. *ut supra.* See pag. 61.

But I have expos'd the Folly of this Assertion in another place. Indeed, I should have turn'd his own Arguments upon him, had he not prevented me, by reviving 'em in such a manner, as gives me a better

advantage over him. We have it thus, [*At the beginning of my Book, I maintained, the Manner, as well as the Thing was explicable. But of what? Of Miracles. No, surely; but of those Doctrines, in Confirmation of which the Miracles are wrought. See N. 77.*] This is truly an unaccountable Paradox. Miracles are certainly the Demonstrations of Sence, and consequently are to be scann'd and judg'd of by common Ideas, even the most clear and indisputable, such as result from *Objects of Sence*; but it's concluded, that Matters of *Revelation* are founded on Objects that are Spiritual and Infinite, and consequently are to us more abstruse and incomprehensible.

Again, Miracles are a direct and immediate Address to the Sence and Reason of Mankind, and are design'd to give an unquestionable Credit to every *reveal'd Truth*, since they procure the Testimony of Infinite Veracity in the behalf of it; and therefore, all the *Reason and Arguments* in Nature will direct, that they should pass the severest Scrutiny. But in
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Matters of Revelation it's concluded, that a great deal reſts upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity, and this depends upon the Evidence of Miracles; and therefore it's abſurd to demand a clearer and more precise Comprehension of the Nature of *reveal'd Truths* than of *Miracles*.

This Gentleman owns, that *Miracles* are a Confirmation of *reveal'd Truths*; that is, at leaſt, as they are an abſolute Atteſtation of their Divine Original: And this is an uncontrollable Demonſtration of the Truth of them. Indeed I'm perſwaded the meereſt Novice in Logick will tell him, That we are to have, at leaſt, as adequate a Knowledge of that which is to confirm, as that which is confirmed by it; or that the Premiſes are to carry as great Evidence in 'em as we expect in the Conclusion: Therefore it's abſurd to ſay, that the *Modus* of *Miracles* is inexplicable, and the *Modus* of all *reveal'd Truths* not ſo. Indeed this Gentleman ſeems to have furniſh'd us with Weapons to fence againſt him with the greateſt Advantage; for if ſuch Poſitions as theſe
muſt

must pass for Truth, it must be Truth in a *Mystery*. And truly, we could not have desir'd a better Argument against him; for, if the *Modus* of *Objects of Sense* be inexplicable, certainly the *Modus* of reveal'd Truths are much more inexplicable; the Immenfeness of whose Nature to a Finite Mind, renders them incomprehensible.

Again, the *Modus* of *Objects of Sense* is not to be explain'd by Ideas of the same kind; much less, is the *Modus* of Infinite and Spiritual Objects to be explain'd by the Ideas of *Objects of Sense*: 'So that, in a word, 'since *Miracles* (as *Objects of Sense*, 'with respect to the *Modus* of 'em) 'are inexplicable, and by consequence, justly to be esteem'd above 'Reason, much more are Matters of 'Revelation, with respect to their 'Modus, to be esteem'd inexplicable, 'above Reason, and consequently mysterious.

I come now to examine, in the last place, his pretended Historical Account of the Rise of *Mystery*, and the Causes of it, under this Title, [*When, why,*

why, and by whom were Myſteries brought into Chriſtianity, Cap. 6. Sect. 3.] And truly I am perſwaded what has already been deliver'd will be eſteem'd (by an impartial Reader) a ſufficient Confutation to this whole Chapter, (at leaſt if it answers the Title) without examining any Paragraph: However, I think it deſerves no Answer, but a ſhort Reply to the Title, and that is capable of no other, but ſuch as we give to an impertinent Queſtion of the *Romaniſts*, *Where was your Religion before Luther?* 'As to the time when *Mystery* 'was introduc'd, I hope it's ſufficiently prov'd to be of the ſame Date 'with Chriſtianity itſelf, being founded not in *Names* or *Words* only, 'but in *Certain Truths*, that are propoſ'd as *Objects of Faith*. But, 2dly, 'for the Perſon by whom, or that 'introduc'd it, I'm perſwaded there's 'enough offer'd to charge it upon the 'Bleſſed Author of the Inſtitution. 'Laſtly, For the Reason why *Myſteries* were introduc'd, I ſhall leave 'em to this notable Reaſoner to diſpute it out with the Infinite Wiſdom

‘dom of GOD, in not creating Man
‘with larger and more comprehen-
‘sible Faculties, or not contriving
‘some more familiar Method of Re-
‘demption. And now, if what has
already been deliver’d stands good
against this Author, (there being as
yet no reason to suspect it) I’ll appeal
to all the World, whether it does not
destroy the malicious Suggestions of
this Chapter, which make *Mystery* to
be a Trick of *Priestcraft*, contriv’d
for the support of Secular Grandeur
and Dominion.

But, to descend to a few Particu-
lars; He observes, (and that too with
a great deal of Contempt and Scorn)
That the Christian Church initiated
their Converts in a Way and Method
not much unlike that of the Heathen
World; which is the most he can
make of all his *Allegations*. Now we
own, the Christian Converts were
gradually initiated, that they were
rank’d in several Classes, and had a
Discipline, and Instructions, peculiar
to each Class, and thereupon prohi-
bited the publication of the sublimest
Parts of Religion, to any but those
that

that had gone through the inferiour Classes; and truly, such Injunctions have not only the unquestionable Dictates of Prudence for their Vindication, but Apostolick Practice and Approbation; for 'tis the establish'd Method with the *Hebrew* Converts, as well as those at *Corinth*; they were brought on gradually to Perfection, first by Milk, then by strong Meats, the one accommodated to Babes in Christ, the other to those of full age; see *Heb. v. ver. 12, 13, 14.* and *1 Cor. iii. 2.* where it's probable the *Jewish* Converts were first instructed in those Scriptures that set forth the easiest parts of our Saviour's Offices, as *Prophet, Priest, and King*; but afterwards, those that asserted his Divinity. I'm sure *St. Clement* makes these Babes to be the *Catechumens*, or those that were instructed in the Catechistick Parts of Christianity; but the Perfect, those that were instructed in the sublimest parts of *Religion*; to wit, the *Essence* of the *Divine Nature*. But now the great Crime is, that all these Measures of Initiation were taken from the Heathens:

142 *Certain Christian Doctrines,*

thens : And this is prov'd, because they are much the same.

It is not now my business to examine the Parallel; tho' I must confess there are, in a great many things, very lively Resemblances : But as for the Crime, I cannot discern where that lies, since the Christians did not symbolize with any Design to form a Comprehension between *Heathenism* and *Christianity* ; nor (as this Author suggests) out of an Opinion of any Religion contain'd in such Rites, see *N. 97.* but out of a Zeal for G O D, and the Souls of Men, they, in *St. Paul's* Language, *became all things unto them, that if possible they might enlarge the Territories of Christ's Kingdom, and save some* ; for, as long as they acted on these Principles, I think there was no more Guilt in 'em, than in *St. Paul's* occasional Compliances with *Jewish* Rites. Indeed our Adversary elsewhere [*Num. 78, 79.*] gives this very account of these Initiations or Compliances ; and therefore, I cannot conceive how he can justify so base an Aspersion, *viz. N. 90.* [*Here is enough to shew how*
Chri-

Christianity became myſterious, and how ſo Divine an Inſtitution did, thro' the Craft and Ambition of Priests and Philoſophers, degenerate into meer Paganism.] It's well known there are other Accounts given of thoſe Religious Rites that were introduc'd in the Primitive Church, than thoſe already assign'd; and thoſe too, that are abundantly ſufficient to vindicate the Lawfulneſs of 'em: I ſhall refer him to St. Cyril, the Author he has cited, who is very particular on this Subject.

But, in a word, it's manifeſt they were in 'emſelves the beſt Expedients to maintain the Diſcipline of the Church, and eſtabliſh a regular and uniform Piety, as well as orthodox, clear, and well-digeſted Faith; ſo unjuſt is the Charge, that makes 'em Artifices to introduce *Myſtery, Ignorance, and Blind Obedience.*

2dly, As for thoſe Emblematical Rites introduc'd in the Adminiſtrations of the Chriſtian Sacraments, they might poſſibly contribute to the eſtabliſhing *Myſteries* in a *Jewiſh* Sence, as it is uſed for Typical Representations,

tions : but they seem to have no tendency to establish Mystery in the sense we contend for ; I mean, as it is put for Incomprehensible Truths.

But let us *reflect* a little on the *Baseness* of this *Accusation* : Here's a general Combination in the Pastors of the Catholick Church, and a great many Hellish Designs form'd in the Womb of it ; *Ambition* and *Covetousness* is the original Spring, *Ceremony* and a great many *superfluous Rites* the Instrument, and the grand Designs were to turn *Religion* into *Mystery*, even to that degree, that in the Opinion of this Author, it has made a Divine Institution degenerate into Paganism ; *N. 90.* But, for what Reason ? Purely because some Christian Rules of Discipline resemble the Religious Rites of Heathens ; for, there can no other be fix'd on those that are truly Primitive. If this be so, I'm sure the Censure is extravagantly absurd. What if a sober Heathen acts upon the strict Rules of Justice, and abhors Slander and Detraction, more than this Calumniator ; must not a good Christian practice the

the same Virtue, for fear of being charg'd with Paganism? I'm sure the Case is the same where the Thing is innocent or lawful.

Indeed, this Gentleman declaims against *Mystery* very heartily, but I am afraid he has too much dealing with one sort of it; for, such *Illogical*, such *Groundless*, such *Vile Aspersions*, must take their Rise from the *Mystery of Iniquity*, that reigns in the high places; for 'tis nothing else but the Language of him that is justly stiled, *the Accuser of his Brethren*.

But, to proceed a little further, I find he has an immortal Abhorrence of the *Cross in Baptism*, of *Altars*, of the *Dedication* or *Consecration* of *Charches*, *Musick*, the *Rites of Burial*; and, in a word, of the *Institution of National Churches*, which he seems to call *Human Faction*, or *Policy*, in one place; [See pag. 172. Ed. 2. and *Usurpations upon Mankind* in another, N. 93.] Now these are Rites and Sanctions enjoyn'd and practis'd in the Establish'd Church of *England*; and when he thinks fit to discover

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wherein the Evil of them consists, or that the People of this National Church are not obliged to yield an Obedience to 'em, I promise an *Answer*, and such as will set him off in his own Colours and Language too ; that is, prove him an impertinent Trifler. It's true, he seems to explode 'em, because [*nothing like these are in the Writings of the Apostles, but they are all plainly contain'd in the Books of the Gentiles, and was the Substance of their Worship :*] when we make such things the Substance of our Worship, then let him accuse us :
 “ But as for the Necessity of finding
 “ the particular Ceremonies in the
 “ Writings of the Apostles, we say
 “ there's none ; it's sufficient we find
 “ 'em by a fair Consequence, inas-
 “ much as we find an Ecclesiastical
 “ Power commissioned to enact pru-
 “ dent Laws for the Peace and Unity
 “ of the Church, for the maintenance
 “ of Decency, Order, and Uniformi-
 “ ty in the Publick Worship of God ;
 “ and as long as Ceremonies are cho-
 “ sen, with respect to the Number,
 “ so

“ ſo as not to bring a Burden, and
 “ create Diſtraction in the Publick
 “ Worſhip of God, and with reſpect
 “ to the Nature of ’em, inasmuch as
 “ they carry a manifeſt Tendency to-
 “ wards the Advancement of the
 “ Ends of Religion.

Again, we ſay Apoſtolick Practice
 or Tradition, and an uninterrupted
 Cuſtom of the Primitive Church, is
 certainly a conſiderable Argument
 not only of the Lawfulneſs, but Au-
 thority of ’em, eſpecially ſo as that
*none ſhall diſpute an Obedience, when
 once they are enjoyn’d by our proper Ec-
 cleſiaſtical Superiours.* I’m ſure Ter-
 tullian makes this an expreſs Rule of
 Obedience in theſe matters, tho’ this
 Author, by the help of a falſe Cita-
 tion, ſeems to inſinuate the contrary:
*Harum & aliarum ejuſmodi disciplina-
 rum ſi legem expoſtules Scripturarum
 nullam invenies: Traditio tibi praten-
 detur* [by way of Rule, whereas he
 reads it, *pratenditur*] *Auctrix, conſue-
 tudo confirmatrix, & fides obſervatrix,*
 Lib. de Coron. c. 4.

But to draw towards a Conclusion, I do not now intend a formal Vindication of Ceremonies; however, I think I have offered enough to publish the Ignorance or Impudence of the Man; when he asserts, That *[nothing is so naturally opposite as Ceremony and Christianity, N. 95.]* What, even those that are appointed to determine (for Decency, and Uniformity's sake) the Natural Circumstances of Publick Worship, such as Time, Place, and Manner? 'Let him make this out by dint of 'Argument, and I'll engage (as was 'offered before) he shall have a fair 'Answer. And now I have gone thro' a tedious Harrangue, which whether it be more made up of Impotent Malice, or Illogical Conclusions, is disputable; and therefore, I think myself happy to arrive at his Conclusion, and more happy that I find little in it, that either deserves, or can justly provoke a Reply: for I find him either bantering the World with his own Objections, and Answers, which if placed in the Balance,

lance, will not weigh a Grain to effect the Merits of the Cause either way, or giving 'em an account of his next Undertakings, tho' in his last Edition, he's so prudent to add a *Reſerve*, that I'm much afraid will baulk the Expectation of the Thing; for he let's us know, he'll take his own time for it, (as a thing not in the Command of any Mortal; and I'm periwaded he'll prove the Maxim by experimental Demonſtration; for, I believe, want of Health, or Buſineſs, or ſomething elſe, will make it a good while before he puts his finiſhing hand to his new intended System of Divinity. One or two things, however, I cannot but remark, before I take a final leave. And,

Fiſt, After all this Argument, the Reader may imagine that the Difference between us is not conſiderable; for he allows, That we cannot pretend to an Adequate Knowledge of Things; and we ſay, That *Divine Truths* are chiefly *Myſterious*, in reſpect of the *Modus* of 'em; and as it's impoſſible to comprehend the

Mysterious part of 'em, so we argue it's not necessary to be known, or comprehended : But yet for all this, the *Difference* is very considerable ; for this Gentleman peremptorily affirms, That the *Modus* of all *Revealed Truths*, is explicable ; see *Num. 77. Sect. 3.* And in the Conclusion he tells us, If his Hypothesis stands good, [*Whatever Instance can be alledged* (he means in contradiction to it) *must either be found not Mysterious, or if it prove a Mystery, not Divinely revealed ;*] so that he has formed a most Compendious Rule for discarding the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, if any be proposed, whose *Modus* he cannot comprehend, and that too by common Ideas, or Notions, his Hypothesis directs, That they are to be rejected as not Divinely revealed : Indeed, whosoever surveys his Hypothesis, may at the first glance discern this to be the Design, though he had not blabbed out the Secret in the close of it ; and certainly the Design is so pernicious, and (tho' formed on a
weak

weak Hypotheſis) liable to influence an unwary Reader, and cheat him out of the main of his Creed, that I wonder this Gentleman has eſcaped ſo long without being chaſtiſed by ſome Pen more accurate than I can pretend to.

The Second thing I ſhall take notice of is, The Proviſions he has made againſt an Answer; for he tells us, That [*no particular Inſtances, or Doctrines of any ſort, can ſerve for a proper Answer to this Diſcourſe.*] This is pretty well truly! He has been very Maſterial in advancing his own Poſitions, and will he be as abſolute in preſcribing to his Answerers? As if nothing muſt paſs for an Answer, that is not formed by his Model, or has not received his *Imprimatur*. As for the force of Inſtances, it's very well known, that an oppoſite Inſtance is perfect Demonſtration againſt a peremptory, and univerſal Poſition in an Adverſary; and the force of Poſitions, Arguments, or Notions that exiſt in Theory, or Universals, are beſt illuſtrated and imprinted by In-

stances. I'm sure he proceeds by these Measures in all his Reasonings, and will he debar others of those Priviledges he allows himself? This is to make himself the absolute Sovereign of Reason and Argument; as if the rest of Mankind had no Right to use any more of either, but what he cantons out by his own Weights, and Measures. But he tells us, Instances can be no Answer to his Discourse, [*As long as the Reasons of it hold good:*] Very true, for if the Reasons hold good, the Instances alledg'd against 'em must be impertinent, or incompetent: But the Instances I have produced are levell'd against his *Reasons* and *Positions* too, and, I hope, they sufficiently destroy both, and then the Method of Answering will justify itself without his License or Approbation.

In a word, as for this Answer, I offer it to every candid impartial Reader with Deference and Submission, who, I question not, will pass over some little Slips or Blots that may arise thro' heat of Argument, if
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the main Lines are correct and clear. And as for this Gentleman, or his Zealous Admirers, I tender the Subſtance, or principal Parts of it, to be treated as he has peremptorily reſolved at the foot of his Diſcourſe; I mean, *give it no more Quarter than he will to Error*; but, according to his utmoſt Abilities and Opportunities, expoſe it in its true Colours, that he may not be charg'd as an Acceſſary againſt himſelf, in rendring his own Labours ineffectual, by weakly mincing or ſoftening of any thing.

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The C L O S E.

I Have now done with this *Man of Reason*; and, upon Examination, I think, there's nothing that can warrant those *base Suggestions* that are scattered throughout his *whole Treatise*; such as charging the *Clergy* with *Priestcraft*, and with *building* an *unjust Authority* upon the *abused Consciences* of the *Laity*. Indeed, I cannot but with Regret observe, how the *Enemies* of our *Establiſh'd Church* have industriously pursued this *Topick*; the most successful *Method* to advance their own *Positions*, and establish to themselves a *lasting Reputation*, has been to create an *Odium*, or *invincible Prejudices*, against the *Body* of the *Clergy*; and in Order to this End, they have endeavoured to *amuse* the *Laity* with *Jealousies* of a *Growing Usurpation*, and represent the whole Order as a *Confederacy*, whose *Main Design* is, *First to Enslave the Minds and Consciences of the rest of Mankind,*

kind, and then to gull 'em of their Civil Rights and Properties. And truly, the Project has obtained ſo far, even amongſt the higheſt Ranks of the Laity, that not only the Labours and Performances, but the very Name and Character of a Clergy-man, is too often treated with the greateſt Air of Contempt: Whereas, if the meaneſt Scribler can but talk of the Right of Humane Reaſon, and Priestcraft, it gives an unqueſtionable Reputation to all his Performances, and they are careſſed and handed about with the greateſt Applauſe. But give me leave to obviate theſe unjuſt and groundleſs Prejudices: And firſt, The Charge of Priestcraft, ſeems to be levell'd at the very Function, and Impeaches the very Order and Inſtitution of it; as if there was ſomething contained in the Office of a Clergy-man, or in thoſe Preliminaries, that neceſſarily prepares us for the Reception of the Office, which Educates a Man in Colluſion and Impoſture, and prompts us to Uſurpation and Tyranny. But theſe are ſenceleſſ and extravagant Con-

Conceits ; that *Men* should enter upon a *Function*, whose *Business* is to promote the *Salvation* of other *Mens Souls*, and professedly practise the *vilest Cheats* upon their own ; and under the *Mask* of promoting *Purity*, and *strict Vertue*, they should at once carry on the *basest Impostures* and *Usurpations*.

But for to proceed : As for the *Imputation* of *Usurpation* in our *English Clergy*, as long as it is fix'd upon the *Whole Body*, I think it ought to be proved from the *Constitution*, or *Polity* of our *Church*. If so, I'm sure, 'twill be difficult to discover any *Footsteps* of *Slavery*, or *Usurpation* : for it's well known, she does not pretend to a *Spirit of Infallibility*, nor goes about to establish an *Implicit Faith*, and a *Blind Obedience*. And tho', as the *Ordinance of GOD*, she assigns a just *Deference* to the *Instructions* of her *Pastors*, and the *Decrees* of her *Governors* ; yet she does not Discard the *Disquisition* of a *Private Reason* : For, in a word, the whole *Labours* of her *Pastors*, are *Addresses*
to

to the *Reason* of her *People*. And now, I know no *Clergy-man*, of *Worth*, or *Prudence*, that pretends to ſtretch his *Line* beyond theſe *Meaſures*. And then, where is the *Uſurpation*? It's true, there are ſome few *Things*, as to the *Exerciſe* of *Eccleſiaſtical Power*, that ſeems to be too rigorouſly cramped by *Civil Laws* and *Sanctions*, and therefore it can be no *Crime*, to wiſh a *Regular* and *Seasonable Alteration*; and if this were effected, it could not be charged with *Invaſion* of *Civil Rights*, no more than *Spiritual Uſurpation*.

But yet, as long as we are bleſſed with *Kings* and *Queens*, that are *Nurſing Fathers* and *Mothers* of *CHRIST's Church*; if every thing does not come up to the *Primitive Model*, the *Inconveniencies* may not be conſiderable, and conſequently there can be no *Temptation* for any *Paſtor* of the *Engliſh Church*, to ſit uneaſie under the *preſent Eſtabliſhment*, much-leſs to aim at laying a *Toke of Slavery* upon the *Laity*: *God* knows, they are ſcarce in a
Con-

Condition to Assert their *Legal Rights*; and therefore, if neither *Honour* nor *Conscience*, nor the *Displeasure* of that *Great GOD*, whom they Serve, can Restrain 'em, it's the greatest Vanity in Nature, to attempt any *Invasions*, or *Incroachments* of this nature; I pray God to strike the *Hearts* of those that have imbibed such *groundless Prejudices*, to reflect upon these things, and consider not only the *Malice*, but *pernicious Designs* of such *Aspersions*. It's very well known, how a *Personal Odium*, or *Prejudice*, defeats the *Labours* of any *Order of Men*; and certainly it has a most fatal Influence in the *Business* of *Religion*: for when those that are entrusted with the Care of *Mens Souls*, are branded for *Cheats* and *Impostors*, the whole *Order* will not only be set aside, as *Persons* that are *impertinent*, or *useless*, but as highly *dangerous* and *pernicious*; and when Men have discarded the *Councils* and *Instructions* of their *Spiritual Guides*, they naturally set up for *Masters of Reason*, and when they allow a *Private*

vate Reason, the ſole and abſolute *Sovereignty*, they are prepared to think, and do, whatever ſeemeth good in their own Eyes; and this is the immediate *Inlet* of *Deuſion* and *Impiety*: ſo that upon the whole, tho' Men are ready to hug and ca-refs the very *Name* of *Prieſtcraft*, and *Spiritual Uſurpation*, when fixt upon the *Sacred Order*, yet unleſs they could make out the Charge more clearly, they would do well to have an *Eye* upon ſuch *undermining Artifices*, and conſider whether it's not *Religion* itſelf, not its *Guardians*, or *Advocates*, that's induſtriouſly ſtruck at? Whether ſuch Practices will not ſupplant the moſt *ſtudied Labours* of *Church-men*, and entirely ſubvert the *Fundamentals* of *Faith*, and the *common Duties* of *Morality*?

I will not fix theſe *Calamities* on any ſingle Cauſe, but they ſeem to have undertaken us; and if ſuch inſufferable *Libertiniſm* is not the *Parent* of 'em, I'm ſure it's rather an immediate *Fore-runner*, than *Contemporary*. I ſhall ſay no more,
the

160 *Certain Christian Doctrines,*
the *Plague* is begun, but whatever
may be the *Fate* of the *present Clergy*,
I pray God put a timely stop to it ;
I mean, so as to suppress the *Tor-*
rent of *Error* and *Impiety*. And tho'
every one should be highly concern-
ed, for the *Vindication* of *abused In-*
nocence ; yet I solemnly declare this,
to be the *prevailing Motive* to these
few concluding Reflections.

F I N I S.

